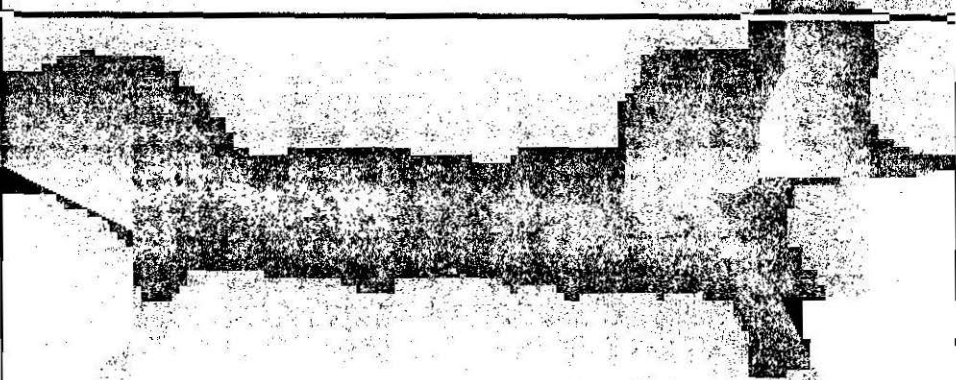
# The Buddha's Philosophy of Language



David J. Kalupahana

A SARVODAYA VISHVA LEKHA PUBLICATION

THE BUDDHA'S
PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE
First edition : 1999

**ISBN 955-599-147-2**

Printed in Sri Lanka
by

SARVODAYA
VISHVA LEKHA
Printers

41 Lumbini Mawatha Ratmalana

# CONTENTS

Preface i - iv

Abbreviations v

1. Language in pre-Buddhist India 1 - 14
2. A language of discovery 15 - 22
3. Defused conception 23 - 33
4. Experience expressed 34 - 40
5. Non-conceptual knowledge 41 - 47
6. Nature of language? 48 - 54
7. Language of temporality 55 - 59
8. Experience and theory 60 - 66
9. Formulation of theory 67 - 71
10. Analysis 72 - 76
11. Language and truth 77 - 83
12. Logic of becoming 84 - 91
13. Language of morals 92 - 98
14. Language of freedom 99 - 104
15. Language after freedom 105 - 111
16. Private and public languages 112 - 117

Conclusion 118 - 121

Notes 122 - 132

Bibliography 133 - 134

# PREFACE

In the Introduction to my recent publication, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy* (1992), it was observed that, although we are unaware of the specific language use by the Buddha, there seems to be no doubt about the way he used whatever language was in vogue. His philosophy of non-substantialism and radical empiricism compelled him to make minimal use of the active voice and to use the passive forms, the aorists and past participles, as is evident in the discourses. Two written languages that emerged subsequently and were associated primarily with Buddhism, even though their spoken forms may have existed before the introduction of Buddhism to these countries, are the classical languages of Sri Lanka and Tibet. Classical Sinhala became a literary medium only after the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka during the third century B.C., and classical Tibetan, including the alphabet, was developed in order to translate Buddhist texts after the introduction of Buddhism to that country in the sixth century A.D. These two languages adopted passive forms to an extent rarely noticed in any other language.[1]

This unusual linguistic phenomenon was traced back to the introductory phrase prefixed to every discourse: "Thus has it been heard by me" (*evam me sutaṁ* or *evam mayā srutam*). Tradition has it that it was Ānanda who made these reports. Even though he did not attain enlightenment and freedom when the Buddha was living, because of his deep affection for the Buddha, it is said that he did attain that state before he participated at the Council when these reports were made. Whether these incidents took place or not, one certainly has to admit that those who reported these discourses were acutely aware of the nature of the Buddha's doctrines.

The present work is an attempt to go beyond this simple introductory phrase and examine the philosophical standpoint that led the Buddha to adopt a 'language of becoming' avoiding the 'language of existence.'

First, it explains how the pre-Buddhist languages in India came to be refined by the metaphysicians leading up to the development of the 'language of existence,' namely, Sanskrit (lit. "the well-done"), the artificial language that only the elite in society was allowed to learn and speak, and which the lower classes in the social hierarchy were not allowed to use. This refinement of the language contributed to the loss of several important linguistic elements which allowed for flexibility of expression. In addition, even if the ordinary people did not have the opportunity to learn the language of the elite, the philosophical ideas were already implanted in them through the activities of the Brahmanical priest so much so that even the ordinary people were used to the concepts whose meanings were fixed in the tradition. Thus the Buddha's reluctance to speak about his experiences of enlightenment and freedom was prompted, not because **any and every** medium of expression was incapable expressing them, but because the concepts available to him during his day were so much fossilized after their permeation with the metaphysics of the Brahmanical philosophical tradition, and the people held on to them with great delight (*ālaya*). The method of analysis as a means of clarifying the meanings of concepts was frequently used by the Buddha (Chapter 10). The analysis revealed the absence of any essential or substantial meanings. The absence of any **such** meaning did not mean that they are meaningless. The Buddha's theory of 'non-substantiality' (*anatta*) does not involve nothingness. While continuing to defuse solidified concepts, the Buddha reintroduced the linguistic elements that allowed for flexibility.

Secondly, the continued use of the same concepts, in spite of their being defused or defossilized, was not sufficient because the substantialist and nihilist implications they acquired at some point could re-emerge. The Buddha needed a language that avoided these substantialist and nihilist implications. This was the language of becoming (*bhava*) that more accurately reflected his experience of change and continuity. It is the

language of 'dependent arising' (*paticcasamuppàda*) that steered clear of the extremes of permanent existence and nihilistic non-existence. Thus the Buddha can be credited with a revolution in linguistic philosophy when he consistently utilized the 'language of becoming' to take the venom off the 'language of existence.' Those who are nurtured in the 'language of existence' and who look for absolute clarity and precision in the medium of expression, when no such clarity and precision are available in the experiences that are expressed, will find the language of dependence too vague. Realizing that vagaries are not totally eliminated in a context where error-free knowledge is only a matter of hope, not a possibility, the Buddha remained content with the language of dependence.

Furthermore, one can see a twofold advantage in adopting a language of dependence. (1) It enables one to express the totality of experiences, without having to reject certain aspects as being beyond the sphere of legitimate philosophical inquiry. The language used to describe what are generally considered to be 'factual' truths can also be utilized in expressing moral truths. Lack of precision is compensated by comprehensiveness. There is no need for two languages. The 'language of becoming' was only a corrective to the 'language of existence,' not a replacement. A major part of the present work is devoted to an examination of the manner in which the Buddha utilized this 'language of becoming' to the explanation of the various problems in philosophy including temporality, formulation of theories, explanation of truth, morals, freedom, etc. (2) It allows room for revisions at the more specific level of explanation or description without having to run into contradictions at the level of generality. In other words, maximum continuity in the explanation is guaranteed, in spite of minor jolts experienced at the level of detailed explanations. Paradigm changes could not and did not occur until the Buddhist philosophers at a later date attempted to inject precision into the language of dependence. Elsewhere I have

pointed out that the adherents of Sarvāstivāda tried to be precise when they distinguished a cause (*hetu*) from a condition (*pratyaya*), a distinction carefully avoided by the Buddha.[2] The result was the emergence of absolutism and, along with it, metaphysical transcendence, for the Sarvāstivādins were the authors of most of the theories that appeared in works such as the *Māhavastu* and the *Lalitavistara*.

Does this mean that the Buddha's language of dependence is the most appropriate one for expressing veridical experiences? To assert this would be to make the Buddha the most dogmatic among philosophers at least in regard to the evaluation of language. It is pointed out that the Buddha avoided any such criticism by the attitude he adopted in regard to all languages. He advised his disciples neither to grasp on to one language as the ultimate means of communication nor to reject language as being incapable of expressing veridical experiences. Strict adherence to or grasping (*abhinivesa*) after language and transgressing or going beyond (*atisāra*) language are two extremes that lead to conflict (*rana*). One who dwells in peace (*aranavihārin*) takes **language to be one of the means by which we gain experience of the world and share that experience with others**. It is one that should not be enthroned as an ultimate reality or rejected as being meaningless.

The evidence gathered here may be helpful in understanding the philosophical enterprises of some of his later disciples like Moggaliputta-Tissa, Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu and Dignāga.

# ABBREVIATIONS

(All references to Pali texts are to the editions of the Pali Text Society, London)

| | |
|---|---|
| *A* | *Aṅguttara-nikāya* |
| *D* | *Dīgha-nikāya* |
| *Dh* | *Dhammapada* |
| *HPB* | *Kalupahana, History of Buddhist Philosophy* |
| *It* | *Itivuttaka* |
| *M* | *Majjhima-nikāya* |
| *S* | *Saṁyutta-nikāya* |
| *Sn* | *Sutta-nipāta* |
| *Thag* | *Theragāthā* |
| *Thig* | *Therīgāthā* |
| *Ud* | *Udāna* |
| *Vbh* | *Vibhaṅga* |

CHAPTER 1

# LANGUAGE IN PRE-BUDDHIST INDIA

## THE VEDAS

F. Max Müller, who produced the *editio princeps* of the *Ṛgveda* (1849-1874), once remarked: "The Veda, I feel convinced, will occupy scholars for centuries to come, and will take and maintain for ever its position as the most ancient of books in the library of mankind."[1] Almost a century later we still find scholars bringing out new translations and adding to our knowledge of this most ancient literature.[2] As such, the *Vedas* and the literature that grew up surrounding the *Vedas* should constitute a fertile pasture for those who are interested in examining the evolution of philosophical and religious ideas of our early ancestors. I shall confine my inquiry to the status and function of language in the evolution of this religious tradition.

There are four *Vedas*: *Ṛg, Yajur, Saman* and *Atharvan*. The *Ṛgveda,* literally, "the knowledge (consisting) of Hymns of Praise,"[3] is the oldest. Even though it shows signs of development in regard to the ritual of sacrifice and the employment of a number of priests at such sacrifices, most of the hymns still represent the innocent speculations of the people not yet dominated by a priesthood as it was the case with the other three *Vedas*. The *Yajurveda* containing sacrificial formulae and the *Sāmaveda* consisting of chants are certainly the works of an organized priesthood which utilized some of the existing hymns of the *Ṛgveda*. The *Atharvaveda*, named after the Atharvans, a priestly family, took some time to gain respectability, being considered "black magic" since it contained hymns intended to bring harm on one's enemies. What is significant is the slightly different perspectives in which speech and, therefore, language were perceived by the

compilers of the early hymns, on the one hand, and the organized priesthood, on the other.

The *Ṛgveda*, it was mentioned, is the "knowledge (consisting) of the Hymns of Praise." The fact that most of these are hymns of praise must be underscored. Praise was bestowed on almost every aspect of the environment. The physical surrounding included, fire, water, wind, the earth, the sun, the moon, dawn, the rain cloud, the thunderstorm, the rivers, mountains and many others. Trees and plants, including the famous Soma were praised. A lengthy hymn expresses reverence to plants with healing properties.[4] The forest (*araṇyāni*) is looked upon as a harmless though frightening goddess who provides sweet fruits.[5] Forest trees (*vanaspati*, lit. "lord of the forest") were held in high esteem. When the Vedic Aryans perceived these elements of the natural surrounding as possessing divine life, they were indeed struggling to understand the dependence of their own lives on the environment. It may not be far-fetched to assume that these early poets were the first environmentalists appreciating and singing praise of the bountiful nature.

It is of interest to note that the Buddha was respecting the conceptions of the early Vedic poets when he recognized gods of the groves (*ārāmadevata*), of the forest (*vanadevatā*), of the trees (*rukkhadevata*) as well as gods who inhabited herbs, grass and large trees (*osadhitinavanaspati*).[6] It is said that when a lay disciple of the Buddha named Citta was taken ill he was communicating with these so-called deities as any naturalist would do when affected by an ailment. However, Citta reminds them that even the highest state one can achieve as a result of maintaining physical fitness (that is, the state of a universal monarch) is subject to impermanence. In other words, nature has a healing power but it does not guarantee permanence. In the end, impermanence prevails.

Perceiving nature in the way they did, the early poets were compelled to recognize some uniformity in nature which was

itself accorded divine status as *ṛta*. In its original conception, *ṛta* may have included both the natural and moral orders. For, to go against or do violence to nature that was held in such high esteem would be a crime. *Ṛtà* as the sacrificial order was most probably a conception emphasized by the priesthood as it emerged into prominence in the life of the Vedic Aryans. Interestingly, while most things in visible nature were given divine status and hymns were composed in praise of them, *Ṛta* itself did not elicit any hymn of praise. Yet, a similar conception, speech or language (*vāc*) did inspire at least one poet to sing its praise.

The authors of the early hymns could not avoid speculating about the very descriptions of nature they were presenting. The medium through which one gives praise to the gods also had to be a divinity. Following is the hymn to *Vāc* or Speech.

1. I move with the Rudras, with the Vasus, with the Ādityas and the All-gods; I sustain Mitrāvaruṇa, both; I sustain Indrāgni, both Asvins.
2. I sustain Soma the lusty, Tvaṣṭṛ and Pūṣan, Bhaga. I bestow wealth upon the one who has the oblations, the zealous, the patron of the sacrifice, the presser.
3. I am the queen, the gatherer of riches, the wise, the first of those worthy of worship. Me as such the gods distributed manifoldly, with many a place and entering upon many a name.
4. Through me he eats his food who discerns, who breathes, who hears what is spoken. Though not aware of it, they dwell in me. Hear, you who are heard! I am telling you what is worthy of belief.
5. Only I myself say what is relished by gods and men, Whome'er I wish to, him I make powerful, him a priest, him a seer, him of goodly wisdom.

6. I stretch the bow for Rudra, for an arrow to smite the one who hates the sacred word. I do battle for the people. I have entered the heaven and earth.

7. I bring forth the Father at the head of this world. My birth is within the waters, in the ocean. From there I extend hither and thither unto all creatures and touch yonder heaven with my crown.

8. Only I blow like the wind, reaching all creatures: beyond the heaven, beyond the earth here - so such have I become by my greatness.[7]

The hymn can be understood in two different ways: (1) the way of the poet and (2) the way of the priest. It was natural for the poet to reflect on the very means that he was adopting when he expressed his adoration of the natural phenomena surrounding him. In this context, his attitude and temperament are important. His praise was not that of a cheat; he was expressing his sincere feelings. He could not be untruthful. To be untruthful was to go against the order (*ṛta*). Hence the term for falsehood in the *Vedas* is "non-order" (*anṛta*). Furthermore, Walter Maurer has made an extremely significant observation about the hymn. Unlike any other hymn in the *Ṛgveda*, the hymn to speech (*vāc*) is presented in the form of a monologue, spoken, according to the traditional interpretation, by the goddess Speech or *Vāc* herself. This is understandable. If the poets were reluctant to admit that the conceptions embodied in their praises of the gods were not their own, they probably felt that Speech or *Vāc* herself was compelling them to do so. This admission may be taken as the seed from which sprouted forth "the lords of the forest" (*vanaspati*) which overshadowed most speculations in India subsequently, namely, the idea that the *Vedas* were revealed texts. The idea of revelation was important for the priest who officiated at the sacrifice and whose life depended on it. It was not a major concern for the poet. He was more interested in justifying his own conceptualizations. The

hymn can therefore be seen as an attempt on the part of the poet to demonstrate the significance of the themes, metaphors and symbolism utilized in a body of literature that emerged primarily as "hymns of praise" of both benign and malignant powers that encircled humanity. Therefore, it was appropriate to allow Speech herself to speak, instead of the poet praising her.

Two psychological attitudes are embodied in the Vedic hymns: anxiety and hope; anxiety arising from the felt helplessness of a human being in the midst of the awesome powers of nature, and the hope that, with proper conceptualizations relating to these natural elements, a human being can overcome these hazards and enjoy nature's bounty. One therefore has to be careful in understanding phrases like "sacred word" (*brahma*) occurring in the hymn. The sacredness that came to be associated with the "word" on a subsequent occasion with the elaboration of the ritual of sacrifice may not be the same as the sacredness that the poet had in mind. For the poet, the sacredness of the word lay in its appropriateness in expressing his/her gratefulness to the natural phenomena. In the ritual of sacrifice, the sacredness consisted of the word's magical or mystical power.

## LANGUAGE IN THE PRIESTLY CULTURE

The above conception of language underwent significant modifications with the coming into prominence of the priestly class and the elaboration of the ritual of sacrifice. The brahman or the priest assumed the role of the intermediary between divinity and humanity. The human origin of the *Vedas* came to be sublated by the belief that they represented sacred texts revealed by the gods to the sages (*ṛṣi*) of yore. The proper recitation of the hymns at the sacrificial ritual was supposed to guarantee the fruitfulness of the sacrifice. The hymns of praise now turned out to be incantations with every word possessing magical power. The preservation of the pristine purity of the

texts became the onerous task of the priest, no easy task at all in the context of an oral tradition. The result was the emergence of six ancillary sciences (*vedāṅga*) dealing with the study of every aspect of Vedic studies. Two of them, etymology (*nirukti*) and grammar (*vyākaraṇa*) pertain specifically to the linguistic issues relating to the study of the *Vedas*.

The term *nirukti* literally means a "definition" (*nir* + *vac*), that is, "making explicit what is being spoken," namely, a word. Such definitions can be presented in two different ways. The first is by analysing the word into its component parts in order to arrive at the ultimate root from which it is derived. The second is by presenting synonyms and/or by attempting to clarify their meanings in relation to their usages in different contexts. The first is an essentialist enterprise, that is, an attempt to discover the meaning of a word by reaching out for the ultimate element, the *etymon* or the literal meaning of a word according to its origin. This is to be achieved through a process whereby one peels off the secondary accretions. Note that the term *etymon* means truth. The second is more of a hermeneutical process whereby the meaning of a term is understood on the basis of its usage, and this is done by comparing it with the use of similar terms. For the Brahmanical thinkers, arriving at the ultimate truth about a word or a term provided a better means of preserving the "sacred language" than the hermeneutical devices which take into consideration the variable use of words by human beings.

Reducing linguistic terms into ultimately irreducible elements may provide us with clarity and certainty regarding the meaning of words. Yet, this process alone is not sufficient to explain language. The study of grammar becomes necessary when words or terms are distinguished in terms of their ultimate meaning. Analysis without synthesis will render a sentence a mere bundle of discrete elements with no relations. Since grammar involves a study of relations among the different components of a sentence, any attempt to reach

precision in this regard would invariably generate a whole mass of definite grammatical rules.

The emphasis on these two areas of linguistic studies ultimately led to the development of the Sanskrit language as well as the compilation of two landmark treatises, Yāska's *Nirukta* and Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*. It also eliminated to some extent the flexibility that was definitely evident in the earlier Vedic idiom. This is evident from the loss of certain verbal forms such as the aorist which did not allow room for setting up of absolute boundaries or horizons.

It is important to note that the two disciplines, etymology and grammar, are two strands of philosophical thinking as well. They are perceivable in some of the philosophical speculations regarding the nature of truth or reality. After all, language is the means by which whatever is realized or conceived as truth is expressed. A passage from the Chāndogya Upaniṣad[8] shows how the two processes appear in philosophical discourse.

> Verily, that self [*ātman*] is (abides) in the heart. Of it the etymological explanation is this. This one is in the heart, therefore it is the heart. He who knows this goes day by day into the heavenly world.
>
> Now that serene being, rising out of this body, and reaching the highest light appears in his own form. He is the self, said he (when asked by the pupils). That is the immortal, the fearless. That is *Brahman*. Verily, the name of that *Brahman* is the True.
>
> Verily, these are the three syllables, *sat, ti, yam*. The *sat*, that is the immortal. The *ti*, that is the mortal. The *yam*, with it one holds the two together. Because with it one holds the two together, therefore it is *yam*. He who knows this goes day by day into the heavenly world.

The search for the essence in human life led to the belief in the ultimately irreducible, permanent and eternal self (*ātman*).

Thus, the definition (*nirvacana*) of self receives an etymological explanation (*nirukta*). However, this etymological explanation does not involve an analysis of the term *ātman* into any of its linguistic components. Instead, it simply identifies the ultimate ground of self. "It is in the heart, therefore it is the heart." The second paragraph then identifies the *ātman* with *brahman*, this latter being designated the true (*satya*). Once *ātman* and *brahman* are identified and are looked upon as a non-dual ultimate reality, the goal of analysis (*nirukti*) is achieved and the need for the second aspect of language, namely, grammar, is eliminated. There are no several truths to be related. At this point, the Upaniṣadic thinker resorts to a fanciful etymology of the term *satya* whereby the term is broken into three further irreducible and immutable syllables (*akṣara*), and proceeds to establish relationships, this time between the immortal and the mortal. The two aspects of language, etymology and grammar thus appear in philosophical discourse as things and relations. It is not much different from the distinction one observes in the philosopher having the greatest impact on modern Western philosophy, namely, David Hume, who distinguished between 'matters of fact' and 'relations of ideas' with the difference that he did not recognize the reality of the latter.

While the attempt to preserve the Vedic hymns provided an impetus for the development of etymological and grammatical studies culminating in the emergence of the Sanskrit language as the principal literary medium in India, there was yet another process that was set in motion by the priests themselves which was responsible for moving traditional Indian thought and its philosophy of language in yet another direction. Just as much as they were interested in establishing the magical power of the Vedic hymns which gave them a superior position in the social hierarchy, they were also concerned about providing philosophical justification to their claim to that superiority. The identification of the priestly class (*brāhmaṇa*) with the mouth

of the mythical person (*puruṣa*) was already found in the later hymns of the *Ṛgveda*.[9] This was to highlight the significance of the chanting of the *Vedas* which was the major function of the priestly class. If everything that issues forth from the mouth, every sound, syllable, word or speech were to be regarded as truth, there would be chaos. There must be some order. Thus, in the *Brāhmaṇas*, which represent the actual domination of the priests (*brāhmaṇa*), Prajāpati is not merely the creator of beings, but also one who reduces them to order from their confusion by entering them with form (*rūpa*) and name (*nāma*).[10] In another passage we find *brahma* creating form and name, where form is identified with mind and name with speech.[11] From here onward, mind and speech continue to battle each other, the mind claiming superiority over speech arguing that the latter is no more than an imitation of the mind, while speech insisting that the mind would be dumb without speech which is the means of expression and communication. This reminds one of the philosophical conflict to be staged later on involving perception and conception. However, what is important is the idea that both are creations of *brahma*. The Brahmanical decision to favour mind over speech seems to indicate the emerging influence of the contemplative tradition, especially what appears in the *Āraṇyakas* and the *Upaniṣads*. Thus speech, which was so important for the early Vedic poets as well as for the brahman priest when he was trying to consolidate his position now loses her exalted status. She becomes Prajāpati's consort to bear his creation. Arthur Berridale Keith provides interesting information about her position in the *Brāhmaṇas*, how she was being used as a tool by the gods as well as Asuras (demons) to get what they wanted.[12] What is most significant is that the *Brāhmaṇas* began distinguishing speech from *brahma*, the sacred word. In other words, all concepts fade into oblivion in the presence of the concept of *brahma*.

This idea is further elaborated in, the *Chāndogya*

*Upaniṣad.*[13] which records a dialogue between Sanatkumāra and Nārada. Nārada, a sage who was supposed to provide knowledge of the supreme self (*paramātma*) becomes a student of Sanatkumāra. Sanatkumāra is five years old and represents the eternal child. He remains so because he was not influenced by the usual dispositions (*saṁskāra*), that is, the conceptual thinking involved in the scriptural lore. The learned Nārada therefore has to go to the unlearned Sanatkumāra and receive instruction. Sanatkumāra wanted to find out what Nārada knew so that he could instruct him on what is beyond. Nārada explains his own knowledge thus:

> Venerable Sir, I know the *Ṛgveda*, the *Yajurveda*, the *Sāmaveda*, the *Atharvana* as the fourth, the epic and the ancient lore as the fifth, the Veda of Vedas (i.e., grammar) propitiation of the fathers (*pitṛ*, the forefathers), the science of numbers, the science of portents, the science of time, logic, ethics, politics, the science of sacred knowledge, the science of elemental spirits, the science of weapons, astronomy, the science of serpants, and the fine arts. This, Venerable Sir, I know.

This essentially is the entire Indian culture starting from the first hymn of the *Veda* up to the time of the compilation of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad.* Sanatkumāra's response was that all this is mere name (*nāmaivaitat*). "He who meditates on name as *brahma* becomes independent as far as name goes." This statement is then repeated in regard to a whole range of things which are considered to be greater than name. These, in an ascending order, include speech, mind, conception, thought, contemplation, understanding, strength, food, water, heat, ether, memory, hope, life, truth, truth and understanding, faith, steadfastness, activity, happiness, the infinite, the infinite and the finite, self-sense and the self. The dialogue ends with a statement by Sanatkumara regarding the primacy of the self (*ātma*).

It means that every conception with which philosophical reflection began had to be abandoned except the conception of *brahma* which is identified with *ātma*. This, in a sense, is not linguistic ineffability of ultimate reality, rather a form of conceptual absolutism where the concept of *brahma* remains the ultimate, an idea that came to be emphasized by the Indian grammarian, Bhartṛhari, at a later time.

## JAINA THEORY OF LANGUAGE

Two responses to the Brahmanical conception of language outlined above were provided by the Jaina leader, Mahāvīra, and the Buddha. Both claimed themselves to be analysts (*vibhajjavāya*,[14] *vibhajjavāda*[15]), and utilized analysis in understanding the meaning of statements or propositions. However, the agreement between them ends here. They differ radically in regard to what they understood to be truth or true statements.

Mahāvīra recommended the adoption of a cautious and critical attitude when asserting what is true. This attitude is said to be embodied in his non-absolutism (*anekāntavāda*). The use of the phrase "maybe" or "possible" (*siyā*, Sk. *syād*, the optative 3 sg. of the verb *asti*, "exists") brings out the conditional character of his assertions. Mahāvīra advised that "a wise one (*paṇṇe*, Sk. *prajñaḥ*) should neither revile [a person for making a categorical assertion] nor explain [things] in non-conditional propositions (*asiyavāya*, *asyādvāda*)."[16] The seven types of conditional propositions are listed under the famous *syādvāda*. They are as follows:

1. It is possible that A is B.
2. It is possible that A is ~B.
3. It is possible that A is (B.~B).
4. It is possible that A is ~(B.~B), that is, unspeakable (*avaktavya*).

5. It is possible that A is B and ~(B.~B).

6. It is possible that A is ~B and ~(B.~B).

7. It is possible that A is (B.~B) and is ~(B.~B).

As K.N. Jayatilleke has pointed out, the Jaina attitude seems to have been that each of these conflicting theories possibly (=*syād*) contains an element of truth and as such can be partly true and partly false or true from one point of view and false from another.[17] He points out that this attitude is reflected in Mahāvīra's solution to some of the metaphysical issues prevalent during his day. Thus, when the question was raised, Is the body (identical with) the soul or different from it? Mahāvīra's response was: "The body is (identical with) the soul and is different from it" (*āyā vi kāye anne vi kāye*).[18] What Jayatilleke failed to note is that this is different from saying: "The body **may be** (identical with) the soul and **may be** different from it." Mahāvīra is speaking of what the case is, not what the case may be. The Buddha would criticize Mahāvīra for two reasons. First, Mahāvīra is attempting to accommodate two contradictory views, each true in itself. As will be explained later, the Buddha refused to assert any such proposition. Secondly, if they were simply contraries, there was a need to clarify the meanings of the two terms, "body" and "soul," for contraries relate to one another and contradictories do not. The Buddha did indeed ask for clarification of terms before proceeding to answer the questions either in the positive or in the negative. It is one thing to say that every theory is partly true and partly false; yet another to argue that every theory may be partly true and partly false. In the former case one has come to a conclusion about truth and falsity, and in the latter case one has not yet reached that conclusion. That conclusion can be arrived at only after an examination of the conditions as well as the meaning of the concepts involved. The Jaina theory of possibilities (*syādvāda*) is intended more as a means of accommodating every (*sarvam*) possibility and

making sure that nothing has been left out rather than clarifying the truth or falsity of a statement. This is part of his claim to omniscience. The relativism of Mahāvīra is therefore one that says that every theory has some truth, period. The reason why Mahāvīra had difficulty with the relativism that recognized conditionality is his commitment to objectivism. I have tried to explain his commitment to objectivism in my recent publication.[19]

Mahāvīra's theory of standpoints (*naya*) involves an analysis of language; hence it is of direct relevance to our present study. Here again he seems to provide positive assertions regarding what may be considered metaphysical claims. The division of the seven standpoints into two categories as substantial (*dravya*) and linguistic (*paryāya*, lit."synonym") is significant, for it raises the age-old problem of reality and description.

The three standpoints included under the substantial are the teleological (*naigama*), the universal (*saṁgraha*) and the conventional (*vyavahāra*). The question as to why these three are so classified is also significant. If we take the term 'substantial' seriously, then one has to assume that the first refers to the **reality** of the goal, the second pertains to the **reality** of the universal and the third involves the **reality** of the relationship between the particular and the universal. The concept of substance is a peculiar one. Distinguished from qualities, substance becomes a term for unity within one entity. Among different entities it can serve as a designation of a common or universal factor. For the Jainas who banked on omniscience (*sarvajñatva*), knowledge of unity (*saṁgraha*) as well as the universal designation (*vyavahāra*) indicative of a relationship between the particular and the universal are of great significance. Elsewhere I have pointed out that the first Buddhist school to attribute omniscience to the Buddha was Sarvāstivāda.[20] In order to do so it had to account for

"everything" (*sarvam*), and this it did by formulating a conception of substance (*svabhāva, dravya*) considered to exist during the past present and the future. The Jaina emphasis on unity and universality is therefore understandable. In addition, they also were interested in accounting for the reality of the goal, even when that goal has not yet been reached.

The linguistic standpoints seem to deal with the nature of descriptions rather than realities. Thus the "method of the straight line" (*ṛjusūtra-naya*) explains the linguistic terms or concepts which give a wrong impression about a reality or a unity, whereas what they really designate are appearances. The straight line itself (*ṛjusūtra*) or a circle of fire (produced by a fire-brand, *ālātacakra*) can be cited as examples. The "method of words" (*sabda-naya*) deals with synonyms. Thus, the terms Sakra, Indra and Purandara are different linguistic entities but all of them refer to one god. What is generally defined as the "etymological standpoint" (*samabhirūḍha-naya*, lit. "placed one on top of another") includes concepts that enables one to make distinctions, as in the case of the three names mentioned above. The so-called "contextual standpoint" (*evambhūta-naya*) is intended to highlight the fact that certain concepts derive their meanings primarily from the manner in which they emerge (*evam + bhūta*, "thus become"). The example of Purandara quoted above as a name for god Indra is said to be meaningful only in the context in which he is involved in the "destruction of fortresses." It is not possible to say whether all these different modes were formulated by Mahāvīra himself. However, Mahāvīra needed to accommodate certain metaphysical concepts if he were to claim omniscience. Some of the theories he inherited from the Ājīvikas were themselves metaphysical. As such, his linguistic analysis would be prompted by a desire to preserve certain concepts like the universal, to the neglect of others.

CHAPTER 2

# A LANGUAGE OF DISCOVERY

The "Discourse on the Noble Quest" *(Ariyapariyesana-sutta)*[1] is the most authentic account of the events leading to the Buddha's enlightenment. As such, it should serve as the most important work that can resolve some of the problems that the later Buddhist encountered, especially the questions as to whether his enlightenment was gradual or sudden, whether it is effable or ineffable, whether knowledge came first and freedom followed. The discourse contains three important statements describing his experience or realization. A superficial treatment of these three statements can lead to a lot of misunderstanding. The three statements refer to

1. his realization of freedom,
2. his realization of dependent arising, and
3. his realization of freedom.

This may sound a bit weird. Are statements 1 and 3 repetitious or are they two different statements regarding freedom? The Buddha's use of language will help us to avoid any pitfalls. In all three instances, the verb used to describe experience is *adhigacchati*. But in the first statement he utilizes the **aorist** form of the verb, namely, *ajjhagamaṁ*, an inflexional form of a verb typically denoting simple occurrence of an action without reference to its completeness; literally, "without horizon" (*a-horistos*). In the last two, he uses the **past participle** form, that is, *adhigato*, which implies a completed action. The first certainly is a description of his experience, a paean of joy. It may aptly be called the statement of discovery, and observation statement that is theory-free. The second and third are conscious attempts to formulate that experience in the most appropriate linguistic medium.

The first statement seems to imply that he has been realizing (*ajjhagamaṁ*) the evil effects (*ādīnava*) of what is subject to birth, decay, disease, death, sorrow, distress and have been realizing the freedom from all these. Then comes the ecstatic statement: 'There arose in me knowledge and insight: "Unshakable is my release. This is the last birth. Now there is no (tendency) to revert to this condition."[2] It may be noted that the statement in quotes is one made by most of the disciples who attained freedom. These, it has been pointed out,[3] are expressions of the determination not to be tempted by the very causes that led to bondage and rebecoming, namely, passion (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*) and confusion (*moha*). To highlight the suddenness of this experience or perceive it as a sudden revelation is to ignore the significance of the enormous striving (*padhāna*) on the part of the person.

The significance of his early education as a prince with opportunities to learn all the traditional sciences including philosophy and religion, of the enormous sacrifices he made by leaving his princely life, his family and country, of his practice of the moral and religious life recommended in the tradition to a level that no one during his day had attempted,[4] are important facts that need to be kept in mind in evaluating the Buddha's attainments, The discourse itself describes the training he received under Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Ramaputta, his dissatisfaction with their achievements and his leaving them in order to undertake a striving (*padhāna*) of his own. We do not get any information as to the nature of this striving or how long he was engaged in it. However, he did speak of the place he selected for this purpose. It was a delightful piece of land, a pleasant forest grove (*vanasaṇḍa*) with a river of clear water flowing by and surrounded by a village where he could collect alms for his sustenance (*gocaragāma*). The reference to the *gocaragāma* may seem to indicate that he spent some days, if not weeks, involved in striving.

It can be assumed that his way of life since his renunciation was dominated by an absence of both passion (*rāga*) for pleasures of sense and feelings of hatred (*dosa*). Thus two of the major obstacles to freedom were already eliminated. What was lingering was confusion (*moha*), and this confusion was confounded by the mass of philosophical theories with which he had come to be acquainted. On a subsequent occasion, he made a poignant statement about this.

> How indeed can one abandon one's own perspective? Guided by inclination and entrenched in what is attractive, a person acts on the basis of [ideas] put together by oneself. As one should know, so should one speak.[5]

The Buddha abandoned the search for a self within and a reality outside. He realized that the substantialist language itself provided evidence for the two kinds of search. With 'I' and 'It', as in the simple statement, "I see it," there was the opportunity to reify both I and It. We see this clearly from the two famous statements in the *Upaniṣads:* "I am *brahma*" (aham brahma asmi) and "That thou art" (*tat tvam asi*). Following upon the heels of that linguistic evidence, we find the development of the linguistic studies in the Brahmanical tradition that gave rise to the concepts of self and the moral absolute (see Chapter 1). The realization of the non-substantiality of all phenomena, of the world and all its denizens, as well as of human contrivances including language, views, theories and ideals, enabled him to divest himself of the last vestiges of passion, and along with it the murk of confusion. This is the battle against Māra (death) that he waged before enlightenment.

After stating that he has realized freedom from the trammels of life such as birth and rebecoming, he immediately proceeded to make the second statement.

> This thought occurred to me: "By me has been realized this doctrine, deep, difficult to see, difficult to understand, peaceful, exalted, not given to a *priori* reasoning, versatile and to be known by the wise."[6]

This doctrine (dhamma) is then summarized by two words both of which were not part of the contemporary vocabulary, whether it be Vediç, Sanskrit or any other Prakrit known to us from this period. The two terms are,

*IDAPPACCAYATĀ* (conditionality) and *PAṬICCASAMUPPĀDA* (dependent arising).

The fact that this realization represents the renunciation of all the current views about truth or reality is evident from the fact that he was compelled to coin both terms anew from whatever linguistic elements available during his day. These two terms served as the key formulae or the language of discovery for generation after generation of Buddhist luminaries during the last 2500 years. Continued attempts have been made to equate this formula with whatever was recognized in the Brahmanical or any other tradition before the Buddha. If there was the possibility of making any such equation, the one who was most qualified to do so was none other than the Buddha himself. And he did not.

The language of conditionality and dependence helped him to overcome the difficulties with the current language which was substantialist to the core. For him, etymology and grammar were very useful disciplines so long as they were not utilized as means of discovering either the ultimately irreducible 'individual,' the 'self' or the incorruptible 'universal.' The language of conditionality and dependence was a middle path that avoided the metaphysical searches of the pre-Buddhist period. Thus, the implications of the two verbal forms, the aorist and the past participle, are again retained when the Buddha selected terms to express his conceptions of the relation and the related. The nominal form, 'dependent arising' (*paṭiccasamuppada*), expresses the idea of a process of happening without a horizon, while the past participle, 'dependently arisen' *(paṭiccasamuppanna)*, explains the events that have already occurred and, therefore, completed. The

former is dependent upon the latter, that is, dependent arising is based upon the experience of the dependently arisen which is a completed event. In the language of the modern philosophers of language, 'dependently arisen' would be an 'observation sentence,' while 'dependent arising' would be an 'observation categorical.' These two will be examined in greater detail in Chapters 6 and 7 respectively. The two concepts therefore represent the Buddha's solution to the linguistic problems associated with etymology and grammar together with their metaphysical underpinnings.

After defining the status of affairs *(ṭhāna)* in terms of this new linguistic terminology, the Buddha then proceeded to make the third statement that explains the nature of freedom (*nibbāna*) he had achieved. The language utilized here was not unfamiliar to the people of his day. But it included characterizations of freedom which were not palatable either to the ordinary person or to the philosopher of religion. It did not refer to a permanent state of existence after death.

> Even this state of affairs *(ṭhāna)* is difficult to see, namely, the appeasement of all dispositions, the relinquishing of all strands of existence, the spewing out of craving, absence of passion, cessation and freedom.[7]

The Buddha argued that most human beings (*pajā*) are delighting in passion (*ālayarāmā*), delighted by passion (*ālayaratā*) and nurtured in passion (*ālayasammuditā*) ; hence their difficulty in understanding the language of change and impermanence embodied in the concepts of conditionality and dependent arising, and the language of freedom which spoke of the appeasement of dispositions, absence of passion, etc. without any reference to permanence and eternality.

It is precisely for these reasons that the Buddha was reluctant to subject himself to the stupendous task of convincing others of his discovery. He first came up with a rather depressing and not too wondrous (*anacchariya*) a statement:

The *dhamma* has been realized by me after great toil. Enough of preaching it, for it is not easily understood by those who are consumed by passion and hatred.

Those engrossed in passion and cloaked by the murk of ignorance will not see this *dhamma* that goes against the stream (=tradition *patisotagāmī*), is effective, difficult to see and is subtle.

However, at the request of Brahma Sahampati, who was the embodiment of virtues, the Buddha decided to preach. In doing so, he was undertaking two difficult and related tasks, namely, explaining the nature of his enlightenment and freedom in a language that would not allow room for the emergence of substantialist metaphysics.

Even though the Buddha was reluctant to follow either the early Brahmanical philosophers in their search for the ultimate constituents discoverable through etymological analyses (*nirukti*) of words and then attempt to find the relations of words in a sentence through pure grammatical studies (*vyākaraṇa*) nor the later Brahmanical thinkers who downgraded language as a tool incapable of defining reality, he did emphasize the importance of meaningful language in the pursuit of freedom. In fact, he was ready to attribute the disappearance of the genuine doctrine (*saddhamma*) to the reckless use of language and its survival to the careful use of it. The following passage, repeated in three discourses,[8] clearly states the value of responsible utilization of linguistic usage.

These two conditions, monks, contribute to the confusion and disappearance of the genuine doctrine; which two? An ill-placed terminology (*dunnikkhittañ ca padavyañjanaṁ*) and a meaning ill-conveyed (*attho ca dunnīto*). When the terminology is ill-placed, the meaning is also not appropriately conveyed.

These two conditions, monks contribute to the stability, non-confusion and non-disappearance of the genuine

doctrine. Which two? A well-placed terminology (*sunikkhittañ ca padavyañjanaṁ*) and the meaning properly conveyed (*attho ca sunīto*). When the terminology is well-placed, the meaning is well-conveyed.

One glaring example of an ill-placed terminology and an ill-conveyed meaning may be quoted at this time with more to come in the following chapters. This occurs in the "Discourse on Way of Language" (*Niruttipatha-sutta*). It reads:

> There are these three modes of linguistic expression (i.e., of etymology, of definition and of conceiving), which are not complicated and have not been complicated, are not confused, will not be confused, and are not faulted by the wise brahmans and recluses, Which three? Whatever material body (*rūpa*) that has been, which has ceased to be, which is past and has changed, 'existed' is its conception (*saṅkhā*), 'existed' is its generality (*sāmañña*), 'existed' is its expression (paññatti). 'Exists' is not its conception; 'will exist' is not its conception. [This statement is repeated for the other four factors of the human personality: feeling *(vedanā)*, perception *(saññā)*, disposition *(saṅkhāra)* and consciousness *(viññāṇa)*.] Whatever material body that is not born, has not appeared, 'will be' is its conception, 'will be' its generality term, 'will be' is its expression. 'Exists' is not its conception; 'existed' is not its conception. [This statement is repeated for the other four factors.] Whatever material body is born, has appeared, 'exists' is its designation, 'exists' is its general term, 'exists' is its expression. 'Existed' is not its conception'will exist' is not its conception. [This statement is repeated for the other four aggregates.]
>
> ... ... ...
>
> Even those who spoke the language of the fasting ascetics, who were non-causationists (*ahetuvāda*), amoralists (*akiriyavāda*) and nihilists (*natthikavāda*), even they did

not think that these three modes of linguistic expression should be condemned or faulted. For what reason? Through fear of blame, reproach and censure.[9]

The mere adoption of a formula like 'dependent arising' was not sufficient, even though it sets the tone of his entire philosophy. He had to adopt several other measures. First and foremost, he was compelled to examine the relationship between experience and linguistic expression. This involved a careful analysis of the possible origin and evolution of language. Secondly, language, at every turn, can give rise to metaphysics. Constructing a totally new and perfect language without making it unintelligible to the ordinary language user was not easy, if not impossible. The Buddha overcame this problem by the frequent use of certain grammatical forms that undercut substantialism. This explains his profuse use of the passive forms, the aorists and past participles, instead of active forms. Thirdly, it was necessary to analyse and define concepts without, at the same time, overlooking their changing applications and usages. In other words, he recognized the flexibility and fluidity of concepts. Fourthly, he saw to it that his explanation of experience and description went hand in hand without allowing one to overtake the other. In other words, he recognized limitations of both experience and language. Fifthly, in order not to allow description to take an upper hand over experience, he had to restrain rational thinking and this is reflected in his very innovative logical reflections. Finally, he outlined a philosophy of language that was consistent with his epistemology, conception of reality, as well as his moral philosophy. In the following chapters, an attempt will be made to examine these issues in greater detail.

## CHAPTER 3

# DEFUSED CONCEPTION

It may not be too far-fetched to assume that initially sensory stimulation is what all beings, human or animal, depend upon for their knowledge of the world. It can be defined as the natural source of knowledge. Any other source of knowledge, whether it be reason, revelation or extrasensory perception, is intended to enable human beings to deal with the problems they confront as they continue to be fed by sensory stimulation. Such problems are varied. The first and the foremost among these problems is the inability on the part of human beings to deal with the "sensible muchness," or the so-called "big blooming buzzing confusion." [1] That sensory confusion has to be provided with some order and thus simplified. Secondly, there is a need to maintain one's identity. Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan, the Apeman* is an interesting attempt to visualize how a human being, separated from the human society at birth and placed in a different environment, would develop its own identity in relation to that particular environment. Finally, as a result of an extremely significant and universal psychological factor, namely, anxiety, human beings are compelled to predict future sensations. Here there is no universally valid form of prediction. One's predictions are to a great extent influenced by one's own identity mentioned above or the goals one sets for oneself which are to some extent determined by interest as well as context. Thus, if we consider two peoples of different persuasions, for example. a person of religious temperament and a scientist, we may find that the future sensations they tend to predict would be different.

Unlike many religious leaders and interpreters of religious traditions who opted for sources of knowledge totally transcending sense experience in order to account for what they considered to be veridical religious experience, the Buddha

remained grounded in this most primary source. However, it was no easy task to do so especially in view of the fact that the Buddha was not a scientist trying to explain the nature of the physical world but was involved in providing a foundation for the moral life as well. When a disciple once reported that he was being questioned by some people as to the goal of the noble life lived under the guidance of the Buddha, the Buddha advised him to respond to such queries by saying that it is for the purpose of understanding sensory experience.[2] Understanding the process of sense experience was not intended as a way of abandoning it altogether, but for the sake of discovering what is wrong with it and making necessary corrections.

However, presenting a theory about the world in terms of sensory experience is not an easy task even for a materialistically inclined scientist. It would be relevant to take a look at what is happening in the field of philosophy of science in the modern world. Observations based upon sensory stimulation is said to be a key element in scientific theory. Unlike during the earlier stages in the development of science, nowadays some philosophers have begun to realize that the relation s between our sensory stimulation and the scientific theory of the world are not that clear-cut. There is an extremely complicated tangle of relations that does not help the scientist to formulate absolutely valid and incorruptible laws which are necessary for prediction, prediction being a major feature of the scientific enterprise. At first, science, relying upon pure mathematics, developed its own vocabulary in order to express the relations and the laws based upon such relations. The Aristotlean legacy of two-valued logic enabled the scientist to weed out the flexible and hence cumbersome conceptual elements from his vocabulary. Yet the evidence for science remained observation.

In his most recent work, W.V. Quine has observed:

> It is common usage to say that the evidence for science is observation, and what we predict are observations. But the

notion of observation is awkward to analyze. Clarification has been sought by a shift to observable objects and events. But a gulf yawns between them and our immediate input from the external world, which is rather the triggering of our sensory receptors.[3]

Being uneasy with this inevitable dependence of scientific theory on observation or experience, some of the philosophers of science have questioned the validity of empiricism and attempted to enthrone 'rationality' in its place. However, this rationality is based upon a deep-seated dislike for relatively triggered by an obsession with the superiority of scientific explanation. Quine, an early advocate of such rationality, has mellowed down to some extent when he tries to combine empiricism with the language of science. Hence his theory of 'observation sentences.'[4] Examples are: 'It's raining,' 'It's getting cold,' 'That's a rabbit.' Quine calls them **occasion sentences.** They are true on some occasions and false on others.

These do not sit well with the scientific attitude according to which if something is true on one occasion it must be true for all time, like the formal truths of mathematics. In order to retain the empiricist temper of the scientific theories, logicians and philosophers of science have, for decades, flirted with what are called counter-factuals. The repeated failure of such a method has compelled Quine to adopt the following stance.

> Observationality is vague at the edges. There are gradations in an individual's readiness to assent. What has passed for an observation sentence, say, 'That's a swan' may to the subject's own surprise leave him undecided when he encounters a black specimen. he may have to resort to **convention** to settle his usage. We shall need now and again to remind ourselves thus of the untidiness of human behaviour, but meanwhile we foster perspicuity by **fancying boundaries.** (Emphasis added.)[5]

The above statement from one of the leading philosophers of the modern world reflects a significant change, especially in the philosophy of science. It marks gradual move from positing counterfactuals to the adjustment of conceptual usage, that is, moving from ontology to language, from setting up ontological boundaries to laying down conceptual boundaries. The attempt is not to determine what objective truth undiluted by human experience is but to find out how best to describe the world presented to sensory stimulation without, at the same time, abandoning the truths of science.

Quine not only perceives observation sentences to be the vehicle of scientific evidence but also as the entering wedge in the learning of language.[6]

The Buddha did not confront anything like modern science. But he had to face absolutisms of the extreme sort, whether it be in the explanation of the physical world, the subjective self or the moral life. Realizing the untenability as well as the dangers of absolutism, he concerned himself with an analysis of the nature of the external world based upon sensory evidence as well as the conceptual baggage that human beings carry with them. The belief in the incorruptibility of concepts is as old as philosophy. While it is true that a human being gradually learns the language of the community to which he/she is born, the tendency to look upon the conceptual apparatus passed down from generation to generation as being sacrosanct has been pervasive. The attempt on the part of the Brahmanical thinkers to preserve the *Vedas* without allowing even a syllabic change has already been mentioned. More sophisticated philosophers of the modern world have posited transcendental categories to explain the perceptual and conceptual thinking on the part of the human beings. Such transcendental categories were supposed to guarantee the uniformity of not only perceptual experience but also conceptual thinking.

Thus, even before examining sensory stimulation as a source of knowledge, it is necessary to defuse this belief in the incorruptibility of concepts, in the transcendental categories that are supposed to filter the sensory input, or even the linguistic structures, all of which were thought to be means by which we could rescue the absoluteness of laws. The Buddha was therefore compelled to examine the origin of concepts even if it turned out to be a speculative enterprise, for this could reveal at least some features of the process of conception. An examination of the nature of the conceptual bag that the human beings carry with them would then provide a better understanding of the perceptual process on the basis of which we come to know the external world.

Thus we start our analysis of the Buddha's philosophy of language, not with an examination of sensory experience, but with an inquiry into the nature of conception. The Buddha realized that the substantialist or absolutist theory of concepts, hence of language, could be defused if there was a way of discovering how they came to be in the first place. Considering the development and sophistication languages had undergone by this time, this was not an easy task. However, taking a cue from the first sound made by a newly born baby as it makes its entry into this world, and seeing how that sound became one of the most universally recognized terms for 'mother,' the Buddha proceeded to explain the origin of a series of concepts.

Despite his reluctance to get involved in the discussion of absolute beginning of things, insisting that it is 'inconceivable' (*anamatagga*),[7] for the sake of refuting the Brahmanical belief in the absoluteness and incorruptibility of the four concepts describing the castes, he speculated on the relative beginning of the world-system. This is the content of his "Discourse on the Beginning" (*Aggaññā-suttanta*).[8] As if following one of his predecessors, Aghamarṣaṇa, the Thales of India, the Buddha described the process of evolution, after a period of dissolution, as the gradual unfolding of the earth from a mass of water

enveloped by a murky darkness. Without even mentioning the concept of *brahma,* which by this time was occupying the position of the ultimate concept from which other concepts were produced, the Buddha began with the conception of 'living being' (*satta*). This means that he was carefully avoiding the speculations of the metaphysicians relating to 'existence.' The metaphysicians throughout the history of philosophy were concerned with this latter concept. In addition to the ancient and classical thinkers of both the East and the West, we find the Cartesian rationalists as well as the existentialists beginning their philosophical speculations with the concept of existence. This is also true of the logicians for whom determining what "There is" or defining x as a major part of the logical enterprise. However, the Buddha looked at such speculations with great suspicion. For him, such inquiries are often prompted by a desire to reach out for the permanent and the eternal (*sassata).* Thus, while continuing to use the verbs for exists' (*atthi, santi, bhavati,* etc.*),* he refrained from utilizing the abstract form 'existence' (*atthi-tā).*[9] He perceived this as one instance where language gets us involved in a metaphysical trap. However, there was another abstract term which originally had similar metaphysical implications but which gradually came to assume the meaning of 'living being' (*satta, Sk. sattva),* and he decided to utilize it. Thus, instead of speculating about primordial existence *(sat)* as his predecessors did, he stated that the first conception to occur when the world process started evolving was 'living beings, living beings' (*asttā sattā*).[10] The repetition of the term 'living beings,' as with other concepts that are to follow, seems to have been intended as a way of avoiding reification, a method adopted profusely in some of the later treatises such as the *Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā.* Another notable feature of the description is the use of the phrase *saṁkhyaṁ gacchanti* meaning "conceiving [s] occur" or "reckoning [s] take place." In other words, the first conception is something that happened instead of being deliberately put together.

While the term 'conception' (*saṁkhyā, saṅkhā*) is used in the above instance, the term *akkhara* (Sk. *akṣara*) is used in all other instances of linguistic creation that follow. The term *akṣara* was used in the Brahmanical literature to denote the ultimate and irreducible, hence the "indestructible" element, that is, the syllable (see Chapter 1). The Buddhist discourses which do not speak of indestructibility seem to take it in the sense of a word, the smallest element in a sentence. Three terms (*akkhara*) are said to have come into existence after the occurrence of the concept of 'living beings.' They, in the order of their occurrence, relate to the experiences of taste, loss and disgust. It is said that sooner or later, after a long period of time, savory earth (*rasa-paṭhavi*) spread over the waters where those beings were, and the beings began to feast on it, whereupon the primitive and original term (*porāṇaṁ aggaññaṁ akkharaṁ*), again presented in repetition as "Lo, the taste; lo, the taste" (*aho rasaṁ, aho rasaṁ*) was born.[11] When as a result of greediness on the part of the people a certain life - giving creeper came to be decimated, the second word occurred, namely, "Oh, we had it! Oh, now it is lost to us!" (*ahu vata no, ahāyi vata no*). The third occurrence took place when a man and a woman engaged in sex (*methuna dhamma*), and others cursed saying: "Perish, you filthy one! Perish, you filthy one!" (*nassa asuci, nassa asuci*). Here we have three experiences, namely, taste, loss and disgust, which often compel us to make exclamations which have resulted in the formation of a variety of expressions. As in the case of the first conception where occurrence was highlighted, in these three instances too we find the statement: "word[s] follow," or "word[s] fall" (*akkharaṁ anupatanti*). Interestingly, unlike in the first case, here it is specifically stated that the beings were unaware of the meanings of the terms (*na tv ev' assa atthaṁ ājañanti*)[12]. It seems to indicate that some of the terms in usage could be of accidental origin.

The next batch of primitive concepts is not the result of

exclamations but occasioned by or born of *(upanibbattaṁ)* certain needs. In the case of these terms it is not stated that the beings did not know the meanings. Thus it can be assumed that they are concepts which are deliberately put together. Several sets of concepts are then listed. The first refers to the ruler.

1. *Mahāsammata,* 'the great elect,' a term for the first monarch, depicting primarily the meaning that the Buddha wanted to associate with monarchy, namely, that he is one who has been agreed upon by the great multitude *(mahājana-sammata).*

2. *Khattiya,* 'the warrior,'. Here again the Buddhist meaning is highlighted when the warrior *(kṣatriya) or* "one who holds the sword" is defined as the "lord of the field" *(khettānaṁ pati),* depicting the Buddhist version of the "moral equivalent to war."

3. *Rājā,* 'the ruler' or 'king.' The meaning the Buddha wanted to infuse into this concept is "one who delights others with righteousness" *dhammena pare rañjeti).*

The second set of concepts refers to the so-called religious people *(brāhmaṇa-maṇḍala).*

1. *Brāhmaṇa,* 'the priest.' The Buddha's definition is not that he is born of the mouth of the mythical person *(puruṣa)* or the one who embodies the ultimate moral absolute *(brahma)* but one who " banishes evil and unwholesome tendencies" *(pāpake akusale dhamme bāhenti).*

2. *Jhāyaka,* 'the contemplative.'

3. *Ajjhāyaka,* 'the teacher.' Now the Buddha gives his own definition of the teacher as a 'non-contemplator' *(a-jhāyaka).* Here he was criticizing those who claimed to be teachers but did not engage themselves in contemplation. They simply remained satisfied with the

tradition. Interestingly, he argues that such non-contemplators were condemned as being low *(hina-sammata)* in the past, yet looked upon as being superior *(seṭṭha-sammata)* now.

The last two concepts mentioned refer to those who lived the household life.

1. *Vessa*, that is, those who preferred to have a family and engaged in nobler professions calling for training and skill *(vissuta-kammanata)*.

2. *Sudda*, those who resorted to cruel ways of life *(luddācāra*, such as hunting) which are lowly *(khuddācāra)*.

The above analysis of the origin of concepts was prompted by the Buddha's desire to refute the Brahmanical caste system where the four concepts, *brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya* and *śūdra* had fossilized to such an extent that they turned out to be permanent and eternal labels for the members of the human community. It is obvious that the above meanings the Buddha assigned to these concepts may not have been part of the implications of these terms when they were first coined or as they gradually gained currency. The Buddha was not unaware of this. As mentioned earlier (see chapter 2), he probably was one of the foremost linguists of his day. But this discourse represents a subtle way of discrediting the belief in the incorruptibility of concepts.

Once the flexibility of concepts -- how their boundaries can expand and contract -- is recognized, it would be possible to reduce the tension between sensory stimulation or experience, on the one hand, and theory, on the other. Conception is in fact the intermediary between these two. Among the variety of the Buddha's analyses of the human personality there are two that can help us to understand his view regarding the status of conception. He utilized the Upanishadic phrase *nāmarupa* to

refer to the psychophysical personality. However, *nāma* and *rūpa* were understood in the *Upanisads* as two distinct entities, hence referred to in the dual form as *nāmarūpābhyām*.[13] The Buddha used it in the singular form as *nāmarūpaṁ*. This means that the human personality was looked upon as a homogeneous one, all the psychophysical factors functioning together, not as a duality of psychic and physical factors. Clarification is often sought for. What are the psychic elements? What constitutes the physical?

> Feeling *(vedanā)*, perception *(saññā)*, volition *(cetanā)*, contact *(phassa)* and attention *(manasikāra)* -- this friend, is called name *(nāma)*. The four great elements *(māhabhuta)* and the form derived from the four great elements *(upādāya rūpa)* -- this friend, is called form *(rūpa)*.[14]

It may be noted that the physical is not reduced to the four elements: earth,water, fire and air. It also includes the derived elements for they account for the living and growing physical personality. It is not a mere lump of dead or inert matter.

When the above definition is placed in the context of another where the physical is defined as contact with resistance *(paṭighasamphassa)* and the psychic as contact with synonym or definition *(adhivacanasamphassa)*,[15] we have an interesting solution to the problem of experience and theory. The latter form of contact involves concepts and language. In other words, the five factors of the psychic personality in the previous analysis, namely, feeling, perception, volition, contact and attention, all function in the context of contact with concepts. This is to say that feeling, perception, contact, volition and attention cannot escape the grip of concepts once the concepts have been learnt.

Philosophical traditions have suggested various ways in which release from this conceptual grip could be achieved. One

has already been mentioned. This is the case of Sanatkumāra, the eternal child of five years (see Chapter1). The process of 'unlearning' has sometimes been encouraged in the Chinese philosophical tradition. The second is to recognize a state of knowledge beyond the conceptual, and hence reflective, thinking. "Non-conceptual knowledge' *(nirvikalpika-jñāna)*, which will be discussed further (see Chapter 5), was proposed by some of the later Indian philosophers, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist. The idea of 'pre-reflective' experience advocated by the phenomenologists of the Western world resembles this manner of solving the problem. The Buddha's solution is epistemological to the extent that it recognizes the inevitability of the influence of conception on human knowledge, but it does not allow those conceptions to be rendered incorruptible so that they become incompatible with the fluctuating experiences. He did not place excessive demands on sensory stimulation, and instead brought the language of the theory closer to sensory stimulation by desolidifying the concepts. If the world that we live in has to be perfect and conform to the absolute laws, that is only an expectation. We discover that a theory does not work only when it is contradicted by experience, not by reason. He did not want to ignore the significance and contribution of sensory stimulation in the matter of gaining knowledge of oneself and the world by enthroning concepts in its place or rejecting concepts altogether.

## CHAPTER 4

# EXPERIENCE EXPRESSED

We have already mentioned that language, whatever form in which it is available to a person, is involved in the sensory experiences of that person, whether it be feeling, perception, contact, volition or attention. In short the experiences of an adult is not only sensory bound but also linguistically grounded. This linguistic grounding is so strong that we are prepared to attribute our perceptions not only to other human beings like ourselves who have the capacity for intelligent communication but also to animals who may not have similar capabilities. Tarzan, the ape-man, was able to learn the language of the humans, but could not communicate with the apes in that language or teach it to the apes. A study of human consciousness and how it relates to sensory stimulation and language will therefore enable us to have a better understanding of the relationship between experience and expression.

The Buddhist term for consciousness is *viññāṇa*. It is the first of two terms of epistemological significance used in the explanation of the process of experience. Whatever be the value of etymology, the Buddha seems to have been interested in selecting terms that express the different psychological and philosophical implications relating to the gradual stages in the process of experience. Thus, the term *viññāṇa*. (derived from the root *jñā* 'to know,' and the prefix *vi* meaning 'to distinguish,' 'to separate,' 'to split,' etc.) is expressive of the idea of discriminative knowledge or awareness. The terms which have been mistakenly understood as synonyms for it, namely, *citta* (thought) and *mano* (mind), do not represent consciousness as cognitive or discriminative awareness. The former can include human thinking which may not be grounded in sense experience at all. Mind is the faculty that is awaiting to grab anything that comes on its way as concepts (*dhamma*).

Thus, what the Buddha considered to be metaphysical ideas are mostly due to the activities of thought and mind, not cognitive awareness represented by consciousness (*viññāṇa*). This is one reason why the discourses often refer to the restraining of thought or mind, never of consciousness. Consciousness is the watershed between the sensory stimulations and the completed act of perception (*saññā*).

Most of the problems philosophers have confronted seem to stem from the belief that the completed act of perception is the source of veridical human knowledge. They have generally been reluctant to deal with the complicated process that culminates in the so-called perception. Many elements that are not part of the process of consciousness or awareness surface by the time the completed perception takes shape. What is at work at the time awareness takes place and what happens with the completed act of perception were matters of great concern for the Buddha.

His psychological inquiries led him to the view that the starting point of all experience regarding oneself and the world is the arising of consciousness (*uppajjati viññāṇaṁ.*). This would have made him an idealist if not for his explanation that this arising is dependent (*paṭicca*) upon the faculty of sense and the object of sense. It is necessary to remember that the faculties include the five physical ones -- eye, ear, nose, tongue and body--as well as the mind. Among these faculties, the mind is the most creative in that it deals with concepts (*dhamma*). These concepts can be based upon the stimulations provided by the five physical faculties or they can be the mind's own creations. While each one of the physical faculties is confined to its own sphere of cognition, the eye operating on colour and form, the ear on sound, the nose on smell, the tongue on taste and the body on touch, the mind functions as the purveyor of all these spheres and helps to coordinate the diverse and variegated stimulations.[1] In this capacity, it appears to be the mind that draws the **conceptual boundaries,** an all important

issue relating to experience and language.

Thus, consciousness following upon sensory stimulations, which includes the contributions of a hyper-active mind, has the most difficult task of sorting out the different inputs. In fact it is confronted by three different kinds of input, one which is purely physical, another which is a combination of the physical and mental, and yet another which is purely mental. Philosophical theories about the nature of experience have tended to support one or the other of these alternatives. The behaviorist emphasizes the stimulus-response model where the physical stimulation is the only genuine form of experience. He is unduly disturbed by the claims of the idealist that experience is purely a mental phenomenon. The more popular Western empiricists (Locke to Hume) began with a blank tablet on which sensory stimulation was supposed to do its writing. Those who responded negatively to this approach (Kant, et. al.) have tried to combine sensory input with unknown and unknowable categories of mind to produce experience.

The Buddha's empiricism avoided certain features of the Western theories of sensory stimulation. In the first instance, he did not assume the mind to be a blank tablet. Secondly, it did not recognize sensory stimulations as being atomic pin-pricks but rather stimulations with **duration** (see Chapter 7). Thirdly, the mind is not a receptacle of unknowable and transcendental categories. By distinguishing consciousness from the activities of the mind the Buddha avoided a problem that the Western empiricists struggled for centuries. By leaving pure conceptual activity to the mind and allowing consciousness the cognitivity of enduring sensory stimulations, the Buddha was able to account for veridical relations. Thus, the authorship of all the relations among events is not assigned to the mind. What the mind does is to take over the experience of related events from consciousness and then proceed to either analyse the events into atomic elements or extend the relations far beyond what is available to cognitive awareness. Over-extended concepts are

purely mental products.

The first of these over-extended concepts generally appears at the time when consciousness or cognitive awareness yields to feeling (*vedanā*), especially of pleasure and pain.[2] This is the conception of the ego. This latter's appearance then influences the remaining part of the sensory process, namely, the manner in which a person treats the perception and conception of the objects which are now taken beyond the information provided by sensory awareness.

The Buddha had a further problem to address. If the mind is supposed to deal with concepts, pulling them in all different directions, what role do these concepts and hence language play in the functioning of consciousness? If only the mind is assigned the function of dealing with concepts, percepts which are the sphere of consciousness will remain totally isolated from concepts, a distinction that has created innumerable problems for philosophers throughout the centuries. The Buddha provides a solution to it by recognizing another form of dependence for consciousness. While stimulation from the external objects provided the most important form of dependence, the Buddha admits an internal mechanism, namely, dispositions (*saṅkhāra*) as another vital form of dependence.[3] The dispositions are of three sorts: bodily (*kaya*), verbal (*vaci*) and mental (*mano*).[4] The dispositions themselves are accumulations of bodily, verbal and mental tendencies resulting from behaviour (*kamma*).[5] This internal mechanism is not one already built into the human personality as a transcendental element but one gradually formed by a human person. It is the recognition of the possibility of inheriting such tendencies at birth, hence the possibility to survival of the human personality, that prevented the Buddha from contributing to the idea of mind as a blank tablet.

Dispositions and consciousness thus function together and is called the process of becoming (*bhava*)[6] because they not only account for the sensory stimulations from the outside world but

also explain the development of an individuated personality. The recognition of verbal disposition and its intimate relationship to consciousness or cognitive awareness enables the Buddha to treat the phenomenon of language as an inalienable part of human experience. However, this also brings him face to face with a dilemma. The language or concepts associated with the hyper-active mind is one thing, and the language related to consciousness is yet another. The former, as is often done, can be adjusted to one's special needs, desires, inclinations. It can set strict boundaries, satisfy the demands for precision, etc. The latter leaves no room for any such adjustments because it is dependent upon experience. The former can be utilized to formulate logical distinctions such as white and non-white. The latter can remain only within empirical distinctions such as between white and black with no **strict** boundaries. In spite of the former's ability to reach sophistication and precision, the Buddha, for both epistemological and moral reasons, opted for the latter (see Chapter 12).

The process of consciousness or cognitive awareness described so far involves analysis, discrimination or distinguishing. It is not merely a tendency on the part of the human beings,[7] but also an epistemological necessity without which knowledge would not be possible, unless one wants to claim that there is a higher form of knowing that is non-discriminative. Interpreters of Buddhism often identify *paññā* (wisdom) with such non-discriminative and non-dual knowledge contrasting it with *viññāṇa*. This is indeed contrary to the Buddha's own perspective as described in the *Mahāvedalla-sutta*.

> Whatever is *paññā* and whatever is *viññāṇa*, these phenomena are related, not distinguished. It is not possible to demonstrate their difference by endless analysis (*vinibbhujitvā vinibbhujitvā*, note the repetition). Whatever is the object of *paññā*, that itself is the object

of *viññāṇa*.[7] Therefore these phenomena are related, not distinguished. It is not possible to demonstrate their difference by endless analysis.[8]

If there were to be any difference between the two forms of knowledge it does not pertain to their objects, but only to the manner in which the sense stimulation is perceived. Thus, *paññā* enables one to know sense stimulation from the perspective of the four noble truths, that is, as being unsatisfactory, etc., while *viññāṇa* perceives the same stimulation as being pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.[9] *Paññā* is therefore the perception of the objective world with wisdom, while *viññāṇa* is simply the ordinary awareness of the same objective world.

Consciousness or cognitive awareness is then followed by a completed act of perception referred to as *saññā*. Unlike the term *viññāṇa* which, as mentioned earlier, involves discriminative knowledge, the term *saññā* implies synthetic knowledge (*sam* + root *jñā*, "putting together and knowing"). It is synthetic in the sense that the stimulation is now placed on a wider horizon involving most of the cognized events with relations as well as conceptualizations. It is in fact a synthesis of the activities of both consciousness and mind. While the experiences are not much **highlighted** in consciousness since consciousness serves as the reserviour of information, completed acts of perception do focus on individual or specific stimulations placing them in relation to others. Thus, determining the specific form in which an object appears, say, an object of the eye, it could be described as blue, yellow, red or white[10].

In this process of comparison and synthesis, the object becomes more and more delineated. And that creates more and more problems for conceptualization and language because of the need to draw boundaries, a function assigned to the hyper-active mind and these boundaries could be drawn in such a way

as to make them appear absolute. We are back to square one. Distinguishing things is important for cognition, synthesis is needed when the content of cognition has to be placed in context, and distinction is again necessary when trying to determine the truth of the content of cognition.

It is not insignificant that the third of the stages mentioned above has been the most important issue for traditional Indian philosophy as well as Western philosophy until the post-modern period. This issue, namely the need to determine the truth value of the content, more than its objectivity of content, has compelled these philosophers to remain within the confines of the absolute demarcations, objects that could satisfy the true/false dichotomy. The first two stages of experience or cognition (*viññāṇa*) and perception (*saññā* ), both of which involved objectivity, are not amenable to this true/false dichotomy. The Buddha had no desire to safeguard this form of rationality. Instead, for epistemological and moral reasons, he remained satisfied with the first two, experience and perception, even though they may not provide for certainty. Similarly, he was content with the expression of experience and perception, even though such expression would not provide the clarity normally expected of language involved in the third stage referred to earlier. The Buddha was willing to give language its proper place, neither too exalted nor too demeaning, but one where flexibility prevails just in the same measure as the flexibility of the very experiences it is supposed to describe.

CHAPTER 5

# NON-CONCEPTUAL KNOWLEDGE

The substantialist true/false dichotomy, corresponding to the existence/non-existence duality (see Chapter 12), has been the most important processing machine in philosophy. When experience and the media of its expression, namely, conception and language, are placed in that processing machine, we get not one product but several, at least three, different ones. They are presented in the form of recipes. When the flexible experiences along with the equally flexible concepts and language are thrown inside this machine, we obtain a recipe for **realism.** Do not trust experience. Go after the objectively real which is what conception and language are supposed to reveal. That objectively real is an essence, a substance or an incorruptible law. The second product is a recipe for **behaviorism.** It says: Yes there are experiences, but these can be known through overt behaviour and language deals only with such overt behavior. There is at least some remote possibility of cleaning up this language to reveal the essence, the substance or the laws, whereas to depend upon experience to reveal them is futile. The third product is a recipe for **phenomenology.** There certainly are experiences. Yet when you want to express them you are using a medium which has nothing to do with that original experience.

The true/false dichotomy is convenient and satisfying. But it has left us with three different babies, and these babies, when they grew up were conflicting with each other to the point of annihilating one another. The manner in which the Buddha got rid of the true/false dichotomy will be discussed in Chapters 11 and 12. The material presented in Chapter 4 is intended to reject the first two recipes. By implication the third also gets eliminated. However, considering the extreme popularity of the the third, especially in the interpretation of the Buddha's

doctrine, it is felt that its treatment in a separate chapter is justified.

The idea that the Buddha recognized a non-conceptual experience, and hence a reality beyond words have become pervasive among recent interpreters of Buddhism. There are three types of evidence presented by the proponents of this view. First is the Buddha's reference to his *dhamma* as being beyond logic (*atakkāvacara*). The second is the assertion that *vitakka* and *vicāra*, explained as 'discriminating thought' and 'initial thought' respectively, are to be abandoned during the preliminary stages of contemplation (*jhāna*) leading to higher contemplations and insight. And this leads to the third assertion that the final stage of the higher contemplations represents an experience devoid of any conceptualizations. All of this evidence seems suspect.

In the first place, *takka* refers to deductive or a *priori* reasoning. Rejection of deduction does not imply the adoption of a non-conceptual experience or a reality. In Chapter 12, we indicate that the Buddha adopted induction as a valid form of knowing. It is not merely a method of reasoning or guessing game but a form of knowledge, hence involving experience and conception.

Secondly, the idea that in the second stage of the preliminary contemplations (*jhāna*), all thought forms are abandoned and that whatever follows has to be non-conceptual is due to a wrong understanding of the concepts of *vitakka* and *vicāra*. This misunderstanding appears in the Theravāda after Buddhaghosa. In the northern Buddhist traditions, it may be the work of the Sautrāntikas or even due to the influence of the philosophy of Yoga advocated by Patañjali and his followers. While it is true that the gradual abandoning of all conceptual thinking takes place in the higher contemplations, nothing like it happens in the six forms of higher knowledge that follow the four preliminary contemplations. In fact, as Buddhaghosa

himself admits, telepathic knowledge (*cetopariyañāṇa*), in its ultimate form can be developed by listening to the vibrations of the *vitakka* of another person. And, most importantly, both *vitakka* and *vicāra* are identified with 'speech dispositions' (*vacī-saṅkhāra*),[1] the internal mechanism that connects language with consciousness (see Chapter 4). This means that it would be necessary to assign different meanings to *vitakka* and *vicāra*. We have argued that the translations of the terms proposed by T.W. Rhys Davids, whose insights have often been more reliable than those of the traditional Buddhist scholars, as 'reasoning' and 'investigation' respectively seem more compatible with the early doctrine.[2] We have also suggested reasons for gradually abandoning these two processes, which, under normal circumstances, help us to gain knowledge and understanding of the world. Unrestrained reasoning and investigation could lead not only to the dissipation of one's energies, but could also generate obsessions, obsessions such as the desire to reach ultimate certainty the failure of which, in its turn, can lead to frustrations. Thus, pursuing reasoning, better understood as 'reflection,' and investigation up to their legitimate limits and being satisfied with whatever information that can be gathered through such means would greatly contribute toward the calm (*upasama*) that eventually leads to equanimity (*upekhā*) and the attitude of openness with which one looks at the world.

Now we come to the most important reason for the recognition of non-conceptual knowledge by the modern interpreters of Buddhism. Following the traditional contemplatives like Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, the Buddha, before his enlightenment, is said to have reached the ultimate stages of contemplations these contemplatives could teach him. Under the former he received instruction as to how to reach the 'state of nothingness' (*ākiñcaññāyatana*), that is, a stage which cannot be described as the experience of 'something' (*kiñci*).[3] If this 'nothingness' or 'absence of

something' implied the absence of a substantial reality or a permanent entity, it could not be different from what the Buddha was advocating after his enlightenment. But we have been told that Āḷāra's disciple 'intent on enlightenment' (*bodhisattva*) was not satisfied with this position. So he left Āḷāra and sought refuge in Uddaka. Under the latter's tutorship, he is said to have reached the stage referred to as 'state of neither perception nor non-perception' (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*).[4] The language of its description is rather clear. It refers to a state of existence which is undefinable in terms of perception (*saññā*) or non-perception (*asaññā*). This indeed is the best candidate for ineffability. However, the Buddha was not satisfied even with this. Hence his abandoning of the relationship with Uddaka. But when, before enlightenment, he returned to the method of contemplation he learned under Āḷāra and Uddaka, he was not going to remain satisfied with what he rejected earlier. He is said to have gone beyond in his strivings and reached a state described as the 'cessation of perception and what is felt' (*saññavedayitanirodha*).[5] The abbreviated description reads as 'state of cessation' (*nirodha-samāpatti*). This state of cessation needs to be distinguished from 'cessation' (*nirodha*) which is a characteristic of freedom (*nibbāna*). The former is non-cognitive, while the latter is cognitive, that is, it is knowledge of the cessation of passion, hatred and confusion or even cessation of rebecoming (*apunabbhava*).

In fact, 'the state of cessation' is said to be experienced by the body (*kāya*), while cessation as freedom is to be experienced through wisdom (*paññā*).[6] When it is said that the state of cessation is to be experienced by the body, it does not mean anything like the experience of the tangibles (*phoṭṭhabba*) through the body (*kāya*). The reason is that the person in this state is not conscious. This is the reason for the Buddha's comparison of the person who has attained this state with a dead person (*mata, kālakata*),[7] the difference being that,

in the case of the former, life has not come to an end, breathing continues and the faculties are clear. The dispositions and consciousness are not functioning. The reason, then, for describing it as a state to be experienced by the body is that the effect of being in such a state is experienced after one has emerged from it. This is the calmness, serenity and relaxation felt in the physical personality. It is comparable to a state of deep-sleep and when one emerges from it one's conscious process is immediately connected with the moment of consciousness at the time one entered the state of cessation, a process that normally takes place when someone falls into deep sleep and wakes up.[8]

These are the putative reasons for the recognition of non-conceptual knowledge in early Buddhism. In addition to the reasons adduced above against considering these as valid reasons for such a recognition, it is possible to present the Buddha's conception of experience or knowledge which certainly discredit the belief in non-conceptual knowledge.

The Buddha was not committed to a behaviourist interpretation of language (see Chapter 6). This was one extreme. Neither was he moving to the other extreme of recognizing a non-verbalized experience or knowledge. His explanation of experience and language (Chapter 4) follows a middle path between these two extremes. Without repeating much of what was said there, let us examine how conception and language are invariably involved in experience and knowledge.

As discussed earlier, the Buddha's explanation of experience recognizes two levels. These two levels are not distinguished in terms of non-occurrence and occurrence of concepts. They represent a difference with regard to the **nature** of the very concepts and language that are involved in experience. The first stage of experience, as stated in Chapter 4, is consciousness (*viññaṇa*). It includes 'verbal dispositions' (*vacl-saṅkhāra*). 'Verbal dispositions', which, as mentioned above, include or are

defined as 'reflection' (*vitakka*) and 'investigation' (*vicāra*). At this level, experience and conception move together, hand in hand, both being flexible and, therefore, able to adjust themselves in such a way that they could function as a harmonious process.

This position is not acceptable to a philosopher who looks upon language as something that a person learns **primarily** through instruction by others, as in the case where Martha (the mother) teaching Tom (the son) how to use the phrase, 'It is raining.' [9] This appears to be an extremely innocent way of explaining what an experience is and how we go about expressing it. But when the Buddha recognized 'verbal dispositions' he was arguing against assuming that language represents a purely stimulus-response model. He was insisting that the individual also contributes something to it.

The second level is when what is normally called a 'perception' (*saññā*) occurs. It has been pointed out that the difference between the first level and the second does not involve the nature of the object perceived but rather the manner in which the perceiving individual demarcates the boundaries of the object. Thus, when consciousness functions in the context of verbal dispositions, perception is said to be identical with 'thought dispositions' (*citta-saṅkhāra*).[10] 'Thought', it was pointed out, can go far beyond what is given to consciousness when it tries to determine the boundaries. Depending upon one's interests, these may be extended or contracted.

These two stages are reflected in the distinction made by the later Buddhist logician, Dignāga.

1. Knows blue (*nīlaṁ jānāti*).
2. Knows that it is blue (*nīlaṁ iti jānāti*).

It appears that this is similar to the distinction made by a behaviourist linguistic philosopher,[11] as

1. '*x* perceives *p*.'
2. '*x* perceives that *p*.'

It may be noted that there is a basic difference between the two systems. The Buddha (and his disciple, Dignāga) were talking about 'knowledge' (*jñāna*), and 'perception' constitutes only one of them, whereas for the Western philosopher both are confined to perception. For someone who looks upon language as the **only** context in which the problem of truth may be decided, the second proposition is important. Thus, we have Quine considering this proposition as the one most relevant to philosophy because it describes perception as having an objective **compliment**, whereas the former is one in which perception is presented in a **content clause**, that is, as the content of perception of an individual which may or may not be true.[12] We have already indicated that the substantialist true/false dichotomy based upon the existence/non-existence duality is the reason for recognition of an 'objective complement' instead of an 'objective content'. In order to discover the 'objective complement' one needs to examine the language, but to reveal the 'objective content' one has to analyse the experience . The former is pure philosophy; the latter injects psychology into philosophy. Furthermore, the Buddha believed that fixing conceptual boundaries, which is the function of the second proposition, can lead more to a distortion of empirical truths, as mentioned in Chapter 4.

Thus, any form of experience or knowledge seems to involve concepts and, therefore, language. The 'state of cessation' (*nirodha-samāpatti, samāpatti* literally meaning 'attainment') is a non-cognitive state, not any form of experience or knowledge and, therefore cannot be a candidate for non-conceptual **knowledge**.

## CHAPTER 6

# NATURE OF LANGUAGE

The Buddha looked upon language as an activity. This activity is not confined to communication among human beings, but also include perception, conception as well as the attainment of freedom. Looking upon language as an activity involving freedom may appear rather odd especially for those who considered language as a form of overt behavior and nothing more.[1] The relationship between language and freedom will be examined in detail in subsequent chapters (see Chapters 14, 15). But at this early stage of our discussion, it is important to take a look at how the Buddha perceived language.

In addition to the array of terms used to refer to the basic components of language such as sound *(sadda),* word *(akkhara, vacana),* concept *(saṅkhā, paññatti, dhammā), synonym (adhivacana, vevacana),* name *(nāma), term (pada)* and grammar *(ākāra, veyyākaraṇa),* the Buddha employed a series of terms to describe language in general. These terms highlight various aspects or functions of language. Their appearance in clusters is an indication that the Buddha recognized language to be a variety of activities. Several clusters occur in the discourses. One seems to refer to language as the 'means' signified by the suffix *-patha* or 'way.' The terms in this cluster are: *adhivacana-patha* (the way of synonymy'), *nirutti-patha* ('the way of etymology'), and *paññatti-patha* ('the way of expression').[2] Another emphasizes the universality of language by prefixing the term *loka* to the different terms, e.g. *loka-sāmañña* ('the commonality of the world' or 'generality of the world'), *loka-nirutti* ('etymology of the world'), *loka-vohāra* ('the usage of the world'), and *loka-paññatti* ('the expression of the world').[3] The phrase *janapada-nirutti* ('etymology of the country') emphasizing particularity, occurs along with the phrase *sāmañña,* meaning 'generality'

or'commonality.[4] Finally we have the term *sammuti* ('convention,' 'agreement').[5]

The term *adhivacana* means synonym (lit., "a word coming upon [*adhi*] another," which is slightly different from the term *nirvacana* meaning 'definition'). *Adhivacana-patha* would therefore mean 'the way of synonymy.' Synonymy has often caused problems for philosophers. We have already noticed that making distinction is not only a tendency in human beings but also an epistemological necessity. However, when such distinguishing is carried to its extreme, as in essentialism, we run into insoluble problems. The Humean principle, "What is distinguishable is also separable," was adhered to by many a modern philosopher. Quine refers to it as the preconceived maxim, "Two words, two senses". He gives an interesting example when the two words 'ape' and 'monkey' were used to refer to what is indiscriminately called *Affe* in German and *singe* in French; an essentialist finds an easy way out by sorting them in terms of size.[6] Much energy has been spent on discussions of subjects like "set theory" in modern philosophy which appear to be prompted by a desire to see a difference in things behind a difference in words.

Being someone trained in the classical Indian linguistic tradition, which was as sophisticated as any linguistic tradition could be, the Buddha was certainly aware of the manner in which essentialist perspectives can creep into an understanding of language. The Buddha's treatment of synonymy is best illustrated by a passage in the "Discourse on the Analysis of Non-conflict" (*Araṇavibhaṅga-sutta*). Here he refers to a series of dialectical variations in the Indian languages of his day for what may be called a 'bowl'. They are *pāti, patta, vittha, sarāva, dhāropa, poṇa* and *pislla*.[7] He did not attempt to clarify the differences in their meanings by distinguishing the different characteristics of the object referred to by each term. Being an anti-essentialist (*anattavādin*), he advised his disciples to take into consideration the purpose served be each one of the objects referred to without trying to grasp the ultimate meaning of the concept.

> "These venerable ones utilize it for this purpose," and thus saying he utilizes it without grasping.[8]

The question is: Without grasping for what? Grasping for ultimate meanings instead of practical and communicative value of concepts. Just as much as the Germans and French were willing to remain satisfied with one word that would designate both a monkey and an ape without attempting to make hair-splitting distinctions, the Buddha was advising his disciples not to grasp on to concepts or overstretch them. Clarification of the meaning of a concept is important for purposes of communication but the search for ultimate meaning would be a move in the wrong direction. Thus, there is nothing wrong in speaking of a large ape or a small ape, a large monkey or a small monkey and express the difference in size. However, to insist upon two totally distinct terms to refer to two animals, who generally appear similar in many respects except size, is it to go looking for the essential characteristics ignoring the commonality. Similarly, to talk of a human being as a two-footed animal is also overstretching the universal. The Buddha's view was that the search for ultimate truths, either at the level of the particular or at the universal, is bound to lead to conflict and strife by pitting one set of ultimate truths against another. This is the basic message of the **Discourse on the Analysis of Non-conflict**.

*Nirutti*, as mentioned earlier (Chapter 1) is etymology. *Nirutti-patha* used to refer to language therefore means 'the way of etymology'. Even though the Buddha did not pursue the analysis of terms into their ultimate elements, he was not unaware of the value of the different components of a word whenever there was a need to express subtle differences in meanings. We have already noticed how the difference between the two terms *viññāna* (cognitive awareness or consciousness) and *saññā* (synthetic knowledge or perception) enabled him to define the important differences in the stages of perception and delineate their epistemological ramifications. It was not intended as a search for the ultimate.

*Nirutti* may therefore lead us to the smallest element in language, that is, the individual or the particular compared with the universal or the general *(sāmañña).* But that individual does not represent an indestructible ultimate component *(akṣara),* for even the smallest unit in a particular language can vary from country to country where the language is spoken. Thus, instead of *niruttipatha,* the 'way of etymology' or *loka-nirutti,* 'etymology of the world,' the Buddha would sometimes use the phrase *janapadanirutti,* 'the etymology of the country,' implying thereby that a word in a language does not have one single rudimentary element which everyone speaking that language has to recognize. There is flexibility even at the bottom level. The list of terms for 'bowl quoted above shows the variety one can find in the same language in different geographical regions.

The 'way of synonymy' *(adhivacanapatha)* and the 'way of etymology'*(niruttipatha),* two terms which often occur together as a pair to describe language, therefore balance out the particular and universal elements in language and serve as a reminder that we should not go to any one of the extremes in defining language. Synonymy carries the placard: "Hey, we are similar to some extent." Etymology carries the banner: "Yes, we are still different to some extent." Extreme notions of identity and difference are dissolved not by reaching up to a transcendent level but by dissolving their strict boundaries and leaving the fringes intact.

Related to the concept of synonymy is generality or commonality *(sāmañña,* abstract noun from *samāna,* 'equal,' 'similar'). Sometimes the term is used in itself to refer to language;[9] at other times the term 'world' *(loka)* is prefixed to it.[10] In the later philosophical traditions, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist, the term *sāmanya* assumed the purely technical meaning of 'universal' which is contrasted with the 'particular' as they occur in logical theory. That technical meaning was probably a development of the usage of the two terms in the "Discourse on the Analysis of Non-conflict." Here the Buddha utilizes the two terms, *janapadanirutti* or the 'way of the etymology of the

country,' discussed earlier, and *sāmañña or* commonality, to refer to language. His advice to his disciples was that they should not grasp on to *(na abhiniveseyya)* the former and should not overstretch *(na atidhāveyya)* the latter. This would imply that *nirutti,* which is the means by which one tries to reach the essence of a particular term or a word, is what one would normally grasp on to, while *sāmañña,* representing the commonality of concepts, hence the universal relation, is what one would normally overstretch. Overstretching of relations is evident in the famous classical metaphysical theory that water is the substance from which the world evolved because it reflects solidity (ice), fluidity (water), heat (warm or hot water) and air (steam).

In a non-technical sense, *sāmañña* or commonality or generality can also mean the common conceptual elements one can find in different languages. For example, two languages that are totally different such as Pali and Chinese exhibit the following conceptual commonality. The Pali term *bhūta* refers to 'a being' (philosophically, that which 'has become'). *Mahā-bhūta* means 'the great element.' The Chinese term for a human being is *jen,* and it uses the same character with an additional stroke *(ta)* to explain the great elements.

Language cannot be a means of communication unless the language users agree upon the various elements of a language as being expressive of their experiences. Thus, agreement or concurrence *(sammuti),* whether it be of a small group or of the world *(loka)* at large, is an important characteristic of language. The use of the term *sammuti,* which implies agreement in the sense of 'thinking together,'makes language not merely a behavioural phenomenon but a psychological one as well. The behavioural approach is favoured by modern philosophers like Quine.

> In psychology one may or may not be a behaviorist, but in linguistic, one has no choice...
>
> There is nothing in linguistic meaning beyond what is to be gleaned from overt behavior in observable circumstances.[11]

This attempt to explain language purely in terms of overt behaviour creates a dilemma for Quine. The unconscious reason for assuming language to be a purely behavioral phenomenon was that it is the only way in which one can gain "clarity and the sweet simplicity" that is afforded by the two-valued logic.[12] However, after abandoning the analytical tradition that tried to tease out the intrinsic meanings rather than averaging out the fluctuant linguistic usage,[13] Quine went in search of clear and substantial notions of meanings with an examination of sentences, whereupon he was confronted with the translation from one language to another. When he tried out the experiment of radical translation, it led to negative results. Hence his famous thesis of indeterminacy of translation. In other words, the indeterminacy of translation does not allow for the "clarity and the sweet simplicity" that is afforded by two-valued logic. The Buddha was not faced with such a dilemma primarily because when he recognized that averaging out the fluctuant linguistic usage, which would support indeterminacy of translation, he was also ready to abandon the search for "clarity and the sweet simplicity" afforded by the two-valued logic (see Chapter 12). Furthermore, the Buddha was not prepared to make speech acts *(vacī-kamma)* a subset of bodily acts *(kāya-kamma)*, ignoring the important mental acts *(mano-kamma)* primarily for the sake of preserving the clarity and simplicity of linguistic theory. *Sammuti* or "thinking together" is not merely an important feature of linguistic behaviour, but also a characteristic of theories we formulate regarding the nature of the world as well as of the moral life. These agreements are not absolutely universal but rather confined to individual groups or societies or even persons (*sammutiyo puthujjā).*[14]

For the Buddha, language has life and continuity because it is part of usage *(vohāra)*. Language drift takes place mostly on the basis of usage. In the modern world, we may find traditionalists in linguistics holding strictly on to a notice like 'pedestrian crossing.' A more pragmatic way of expressing this idea will be

found in the form of 'Ped X'ing.' When a traditionalist first confronts such a board he may have a tinge in his spinal chord thinking: "Is this the place where pedestrians are axed?" But soon he becomes used to it. Usage *(vohāra)* thus serves the language drift. Once language becomes sacred or the medium of sacred teachings, the drift is arrested. Indeed this happened to the Pali language when it became a classical language of the Buddhists. In the Indian context, Sanskrit and certain Prakrits like Pali became 'dead languages.'

Finally, we come to the most significant feature of language, namely, expression, indication or making known *(paññatti)* of an experience. Without reducing language to simple behavioral sentences, language as *paññatti* involves expression of almost every aspect of human cognitivity, whether it be of the physical world, of the psychological states, events and relations, as well as social and moral phenomena. This does not mean that every linguistic expression is genuine. Sorting out the genuine experiences from simple beliefs, expectations or wayward fancies has been the major task of philosophers for centuries. That subject of language and truth will be treated separately (see Chapter 11).

This means that a comprehensive description of language could not be presented through the use of a single term such as 'speech' *(bhāsā)* which is the modern Indian equivalent for language in general. The Buddha was living at a time when the very nature and function of language were being debated. The utilization of a cluster of terms expressive of the different functions as well as the limitations of linguistic expression was therefore a good reminder to those who looked at language from a behaviouristic or substantialist or essentialist or even a negative perspective.

CHAPTER 7

# LANGUAGE OF TEMPORALITY

The radical empiricist of the Western world, William James, for whom the concept of the present as one possessing duration was extremely important, quotes an author by name E.R. Clay from whom he adopts the phrase 'the specious present.'[1] The quotation reads as follows:

> The relation of experience to time has not been profoundly studied. Its objects are given as being of the present, but the parts of time referred to by the datum is a very different thing from the conterminus of the past and the future which philosophy denotes by the name Present. The present to which the datum refers is really a part of the past --a recent past -- delusively given as being a time that intervenes between the past and the future. Let it be named the specious present, and let the past that is given as being the past be known as the obvious past. All the notes of a bar of a song seem to the listener to be contained in the present. All the changes of place of a meteor seem to the beholder to be contained in the present. At the instance of the determination of such series no part of the time measured by them seems to be a past. Time, then, considered relatively to human apprehension, consists of four parts, viz. the obvious past, the specious present, the real present, and the future. Omitting the specious present, it consists of...non-entities, the past which does not exist, the future that does not exist, and their conterminous the present: the faculty from which it proceeds lies to us in the fiction of the specious present.

Mr. Clay's analysis comes after a long period of speculation in the West regarding the nature of time and space by some of its illustrious philosophers belonging to the empiricist, rationalist and scientific traditions. 'Specious' implies having a

false look of truth or genuineness. That implication arises as a result of the 'enduring present' being contrasted with the concepts of the past, present and future measured in terms of three different forms of existence: existence that has gone or passed away, the present existence, and the existence that has not yet occurred. To speak of existence in this way may seem a bit wierd, but soon it will be evident that the substantialists of every tradition were looking at the three periods of time precisely in this way. However, Mr. Clay places it in the context of the existence/non-existence dichotomy, which was also popular in the substantialist traditions. As a result, even the present, which ought to be the existent, becomes a non-entity because it is the conterminous of the two non-entities, the past and the future.

Even though the Buddha did not consider the 'enduring present' as having a false look of truth or genuineness, he seems to have been aware of the dangers in analysing time into past, present and future, if that analysis is based upon the conception of 'existence.' Thus, a passage occurring in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,*[2] and quoted three times in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad,*[3] refers to the *ātman* (the permanent and eternal reality) as the "Lord of what has been and of what is to be." Significantly, there is no reference to the present because it is the sphere of the existent. The question is about the past and the future, whether the *ātman* exists in those contexts as well. By making the *ātman* the "Lord of the past and the future," the Upaniṣadic thinker is making it a reality even during these two periods of time. This shows how the language of temporality, even when involving the substantialist existence/non-existence dichotomy, does not allow room for expressing something that is ever present, and hence the Upaniṣadic philosopher forcing the issue by making the present the "Lord of the past and future." It may be noted that the most substantialist school of Buddhism did precisely this when it argued that 'substance' *(svabhāva)* exists during the past, present and future.

Thus, a substantialist interpretation of the language of temporality has led us to believing in a permanent and eternal reality. The negation of substance in turn compels us to adopt a language of temporality where the past and the future are non-existence, leaving us with the immediate present, which represents the Sautrāntika (Buddhist) and Humean (Western) 'sandheap' conception of the world with no genuine relations.

In order to escape this dilemma, the Buddha decided to modify the very language in which temporality is expressed. The traditional Indian term for the 'present' is the present participle *vartamāna* (Pali, *vattamāna)*, meaning 'existing.' Interestingly, it never occurs in the early discourses. It appears in the Buddhist literature for the first time centuries later, especially in the commentaries.[4] Instead, the Buddha utilized the past participle, *paccuppanna* (Sk. *pratyutpanna*, lit. "arisen before or in front [of oneself]. This latter is etymologically and semantically related to the term *paṭiccasamuppanna,* 'the dependently arisen' discussed in Chapter 2. While the present participle, 'existing' (*vattamāna),* tends to emphasize a sharp dichotomy between the past and the present, comparable to the distinction between existence and non-existence, the past participle, 'arisen before or in front,' implies a continued activity from the recent past terminating in the present. In other words, it allows a horizon within which the present appears and enables one to understand how that presence is conditioned. This, indeed, is the implication of the term 'dependently arisen.' As such, the 'enduring present' need not be either specious or merely a continuity of what is present, but what has come to be on the basis of conditions, thereby having more reality accorded to it as the context in which causality functions.

Having replaced the language of 'existence,' the Buddha was then able to challenge the substantialist attempt to recognize self *(ātman)* that exists during the past, present and future. He questions Citta, the son of an elephant trainer, as to

whether it is possible to say that when an acquisition of self (*atta-paṭilābha*) in the past is true (*sacca*), such acquisition in the present and the future would be false (*mogha*).[5] The same question is raised with regard to the present and future acquisitions of self. Citta responded in the positive and went on to admit that the acquisition of self in the past would be true for that time (*tasmiṁ samaye*), not for others. Similarly with the other periods of time. The Buddha approving Citta's response, remarked:

> Citta, just from a cow comes milk, and from milk curds, and from curds butter, and from butter ghee, and from ghee junket; yet when there is milk, there is no conceiving as 'curd' or 'butter' or 'ghee' or junket'; instead on that occasion there is conceiving as 'milk'.[6]

This is then followed by the statement:

> So, Citta, are these commonalities of the world (*loka-sāmañña*) the etymologies of the world (*loka-niruttiyo*), usages of the world (*loka-vohāra*), designations of the world (*loka-paññattiyo*) [all phrases referring to language, see Chapter 5] through which the perfected one communicates without grasping.[7]

Conception and language are so defined that one can assign a good measure of reality to the experienced time without either rejecting it as a myth or making it an absolute reality.

A second term for the 'present' popular in the early discourses is *diṭṭha-dhamma.* It is generally explained as a reference to the 'immediately perceived things.' The contexts in which the term is used do not allow room for such an interpretation. There are two uses of the term in the discourses. One is where it occurs along with the phrase *patta-dhamma* meaning 'the attained *dhamma.*'[8] In such a context, the phrase *diṭṭha-dhamma* is better understood as 'the perceived moral order,' and *patta-dhamma* would then imply

what has been achieved or attained, namely, the ultimate goal. However, the more popular use of the term is in the sense of 'the perceived life' (*dṛṣṭa-janman*), hence the 'present life.' It is contrasted with the 'future life' (*samparāyika*).[9] Thus, we have the concept of actions *(kamma)* whose consequences are to be reaped in the present life *(diṭṭha-dhamma-vedanīya)* in contrast to those that may be experienced in the future lives.[10]

Another interesting feature of the Buddha's language of temporality is his use of the term for 'space' to refer to time as well. In the traditional literature, the term *adhvan* is used exclusively in the sense of road, way, orbit, journey or course. In fact, Monier Williams has noted that Buddhism and Jainism used it in the sense of time.[11] The "Discourse on Convocation" *(Sangīti-suttanta)* enumerates the three *addhā* as past, present and future.[12] Elsewhere it is said:

> A person, wandering for a long stretch of time with craving as companion, does not overcome the continued cycle of wandering *(saṁsāra)* in this or other modes of life.[13]

Similarly, the *Dhammapada* speaks of a person who grieves for a long time *(digham addhānam)* as a result of associating with fools.[14] More importantly, after referring to the three periods of time as *addhā,* the Buddha advised against overstepping the bounds of prediction *(akkheyya).*[15] Using the same term to refer to both time and space, the Buddha was attempting to eliminate the sharp demaraction between them and to relate them to experience.

It is extremely important to note that after clarifying and redefining the meaning of the 'present' in the above manner, the Buddha returns to the concepts of past, present and future occurring in the ordinary language and warned his disciples not to confuse these three modes of expression. This is the implication of the "Discourse on Language" quoted in full at the end of Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 8

# EXPERIENCE AND THEORY

The relationship between theory and experience has been the subject of recent discussions in the philosophy of language, especially relating to the philosophy of science. The variety of scientific disciplines has come to be built on layer after layer of theories, from the most basic to the extremely complicated, sometimes old ones being modified or even replaced by new ones. New discoveries are being made day after day. The usual question is, To what extent is a new discovery genuinely novel and is not dependent upon previous theories. The most recent solution to this problem is from Quine.

> Think first of primitive ones [that is, observation sentences], the entering wedge in language learning. They are associated as wholes to appropriate ranges of stimulation, by conditioning. Component words are there merely as component syllables, theory-free. But these words recur in theoretical contexts in the fullness of time. It is precisely in this sharing of words, by observation sentences and theoretical sentences, that provides logical connections between the two kinds of sentences and makes observations relevant to scientific theory. Retrospectively those once innocent observation sentences are theory-laden indeed. An observation sentence containing no word more technical than 'water' will join forces with theoretical sentences containing terms as technical as '$H_2O$'. Seen holophrastically, as conditioned to stimulatory situations, the sentence is theory-free; seen analytically, word by words, it is theory-laden.[1]

This is only a justification of the objectivity of the scientific explanation by insisting that from one perspective, that is, when the scientist utters the phrase '$H_2O$' it has to be theory-free, like the utterance of the word 'water' by one who is learning a

language. It becomes theory-laden only reflectively. This does not seem to be very different from the attempt of a philosopher like Edmund Husserl who, also trying to justify scientific statements, considered genuine experience to be 'pre-reflective.' However, it does not solve the dilemma of other philosophers like Bertrand Russell who had difficulty believing that something considered to be true at one point of time could be false at another, this being the legacy of the scientific enterprise that continued to replace one 'observation sentence' with another.

One reason for the multiplication of 'observation sentences' is the fragmentation of scientific disciplines as, for example, astronomy, physics, chemistry (physical and organic), botany, zoology and medicine. We are not unfamiliar with the situation where a person specializing in physical chemistry would be ignorant of some specialized aspect of organic chemistry. Thus, what is considered a **novel experience** in one discipline is at one point, almost totally unrelated to a **novel experience** in another. These **novel experiences** would not be so novel if they were to be mere off-shoots of the prevalent theories. Hence the need to assume that the holophrastic statements that describe such experiences are theory-free like the primitive terms, and that they become theory-laden only retrospectively. In spite of their diversity, the scientific disciplines have one common denominator, namely, their materialistic temper. This is the primary reason for Quine's assumption that 'observation sentences' relate primarily to overt behavior.[2]

The relationship between experience and theory takes on a totally different character in Buddhism. In the case of the Buddha's doctrine there was no such fragmentation of disciplines. The disciplines that appear irreconcillable in the modern perspective, disciplines such as physics, chemistry and medicine, on the one hand, and psychology, ethics and religion, on the other, were all perceived as related disciplines. What happens in one is perceived as affecting the other. For example,

nuclear physics and morality could not be totally independent disciplines. It they were to be pursued independently, it could be catastrophic. Similarly, agricultural technology could not be independent of environmental studies. The objectivity, precision and certainty involved in nuclear research cannot undermine the validity and significance of morals even if the latter is lacking such characteristics. What relates them is their usefulness in bringing about human welfare and happiness.

Thus, the Buddha's enlightenment and his expression of the understanding of the nature of the world, human and animal life, morality and freedom, were all summed up in one holophrastic statement: 'dependently arisen' (*paṭiccasamuppanna*), even though that formulation may not be as precise as some of the 'observation sentences' in physics or astronomy. For the Buddha, comprehensiveness of the observation sentence was more important than its precision. Referring to the Buddha's explanation of a phenomenon as 'dependently arisen', his disciple, Ānanda, has the following to say:

> It is wondrous, Sir it is unusual, wherein indeed with one term the entirety of meaning has been expressed.
>
> (*Acchariyaṁ bhante abbhutaṁ bhante yatra hi nāma ekena padena sabbo attho vutto bhavissati.*)[3]

This was not a simple innocent exclamation like the term 'water' or any of its primitive equivalents when it was first uttered. It was a phrase carefully thought out. If there is any sense in considering it theory-free, it is either because it represents a new insight of the Buddha into the nature of things or because it had nothing to do with any of the theories found before his time. However, it thereafter served as the theory in terms of which every phenomenon of experience, whether it be in the area of the physical, the psychological, the social, the moral or even the linguistic, came to be analysed. This holistic treatment of human experiences without

fragmenting them or placing them within strictly demarcated boundaries enabled the Buddha to adopt a middle standpoint in the explanation of every form of experience listed above and steer clear of the extreme views that resulted from such fragmentation.

Those of us who are fascinated by the discoveries of science and who are enjoying the material benefits of modern technology, that is, what Buddha may describe as the satisfaction (*assāda*), and at the sametime being frightened by the dangers or what the Buḍdha called their unfortunate consequences (*ādīnava*), may have difficulty understanding how one single discovery of the Buddha could serve as an explanation of the innumerable problems human beings face day after day, year after year or generation after generation. How can there be a panecea for all the variegated problems of the world, especially when they are not generated by identical circumstances? In other words, does the explanation of all human experiences as being dependently arisen allow for the possibility of new situations? The Buddha's answer to such questions seems rather simple. He did not seal the future by insisting that it ought to be such and such. The absolute laws in fact do this. He allowed experience to speak for itself with an openness. Experience was his teacher when dealing with new situations. Once he was questioned as to whether he had ready-made answers to queries made by the wise ones who came to consult with him. He denied this. Since his knowledge was not confined to one particular aspect of life but covered the entire spectrum of human experience, he argued that he has penetrated into the nature of phenomena (*dhammadhātu*) and was able to provide answers to questions based on 'good grounds' (*ṭhānaso*).[4] Furthermore, his formulation of that under standing as 'dependent arising' does not accommodate any conception of what 'ought to be' but only what 'has come to be' (*yathābhūta*), and this latter is explained in the most general terms. As such, the arising of a new situation can be

explained without running into serious contradictions. Contradictions are more often associated with metaphysical speculations resulting either from over-stretching of concepts or because of attempts to determine what things ought to be.

Thus, the linguistic difficulties confronted by the Buddha were different from those that a modern philosopher of science encounters, especially with two languages, one the ordinary language and the other devised by the scientific community which is intelligible to those who are trained in the specific scientific discipline. The Buddha was using the very same language used by the metaphysicians of his day but with certain modifications. This is how his own theory is reflected in his use of the language.

It was pointed out that the search for essence, whether it be in the human person or in the world of experience contributed to the development of the theories of self *(ātman)* or substance *(svabhāva)*. In these cases, often the language itself was the supporting evidence. The famous passage from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* describing the origin of the world from self reads as follows:

> In the beginning this (world) was only the self, in the shape of a person. Looking around he saw nothing else than the self. He first said, 'I am.' Therefore arose the name of I. Therefore, even to this day when one is addressed he says first 'This is I' and then speaks whatever other name he may have.[5]

The Buddha's realization that existence was devoid of such essences *(suñña)* and that all experienced phonemena are non-substantial *(anatta)* and 'dependently arisen' *(paṭiccasamuppanna)* could not be expressed in the substantival forms of the language. Yet, without these substantival forms there was no language. Even if one were to deny that there exists a permanent and eternal self or substance, there still was the tendency to replace that entity with

something else that is supposed to exist, as reflected even in the logical symbol x referred to earlier. If there were to be no self to account for the experiences, there must at least be 'consciousness' *(viññāṇa)*. This, the Buddha admitted. The analytical process stopped here. He did not try to analyse 'consciousness' into further minute parts, material, neural or psychic, in order to demonstrate that it is non-substantial. Instead, he first explained it as a function by using the verbal form of *viññāṇa*, namely, *vijānāti*, 'is conscious of.' Yet, it was possible for the function itself to be reified. The Buddha wanted to avoid any such functionalism. Hence his repetition of the verb and placing both within quotes by the use of the particle *iti*. The reason why they were placed in quotes, as mentioned earlier (see Chapter 4), was to remind that experiencing and conceiving are not two distinct and unrelated processes, that some conceptualization was already involved in the experiences. Thus, the Buddha's problem was having to constantly de-reify. Some measure of success was achieved when he avoided wherever possible the use of active verbs such as *vijānāti* and resorted to the use of passive verbs and past passive participles.

That the Buddha did not adopt a view, that *dhamma*, whatever that be, is theory-free is a popular belief among some of the modern scholars and interpreters of Buddhism. The essentialist schools like Sarvāstivāda and the Sautrāntika that came into prominence a couple of centuries after the Buddha as well as the extreme form of idealism that emerged in the Buddhist tradition during the third and fourth centuries C. E. and which advocated a transcendentalist theory of knowledge was partly responsible for this. Extremely popular in modern times is the interpretation by the Kyoto school of Buddhism founded by Nishida Kitaro who perceived Buddhism through the eyes of a phenomenologist.

It is also possible that such an interpretation also could emerge as a result of misreading some of the statements in the

early discourses. The term *diṭṭhi* ('view', 'perspective') is often used there to refer to metaphysical views. However, except in the *Sutta-nipāta,* whenever the Buddha spoke of *diṭṭhi,* he would normally identify them. Sixty-two such metaphysical views are discussed in the "Discourse on Brahma's Net" *(Brahmajāla-suttanta).*[6] Besides these metaphysical views, sometimes referred to as wrong views *(micchā diṭṭhi),* the Buddha also recognized right views *(sammā diṭṭhi).* In contrast to the wrong views, this latter is identified with the theory of dependent arising.[7] It is also also called a 'noble view' *(ariyā diṭṭhi).*

In the *Sutta-nipāta,* especially in the *Aṭṭhaka-vagga,* however, the term *diṭṭhi* is not qualified either as *micchā* or as *sammā* or even as *ariyā.* The Buddha's constant advice in these discourses is to free oneself from *diṭṭhi.* This seems to imply the abandoning or renouncing of all views, perspectives, theories, etc., a position a scientist would normally claim in order to emphasize the objectivity of his discoveries. Yet a careful reading of the discourses will reveal that even though the Buddha did not use the term *micchā* to qualify these views, he did define the sort of views he was condemning. They are views or theories that are guided by inclination *(chandānunīta)* and grasped on to because of their attractiveness (*ruciyā niviṭṭha*),[8] not because they are either useful (*atthasaṁhita*) or true *(bhūta, taccha).* This would be the best definition of metaphysical views one can provide. The most succinct definition of right view or perspective is found in the famous Discourse to Kaccāyana *(Kaccāyanagotta-sutta).*[9]

CHAPTER 9

# FORMULATION OF THEORY

As mentioned earlier, the Buddha formulated only one theory, that is, the theory of dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppada*), and he proceeded to apply it in the explanation of every aspect of experience. Since he renounced the search for certainty, and since predictability was not the most important feature of his theory, its formulation turns out to be different from those of the modern philosophers of language or science.

Working within the framework of an isolated discipline a scientist seeks to support a theory by observation. Hypothesis plays an important role in this. Following upon a mass of theories which the scientist has already mastered and inspired by some interest in solving some problem either created by the existing body of theories or prompted by a human need, the scientist sets up the hypothesis. If the hypothesis is true, then the experiment, which consists of a set of observables dictated by the theories, should produce an observable result, which is anticipated. After that, the hypothesis becomes part of the backlog of theories. If the anticipated result does not occur, the scientist abandons the experiment as well as the hypothesis. What if an unanticipated result turns up? The scientist cannot simply add this to the backlog of theories. Either the scientist is compelled to expand the conceptual framework in order to accommodate the new discovery or if it is of no relevance it can be left in a cold storage for future use. This may be why a noted natural scientist and a great student of the history of philosophy, Charles Sanders Peirce, remarked:

> True science is distinctively the study of useless things. For the useful things will get studied without the aid of scientific men. To employ these rare minds on such things

is like running a steam engine by burning diamonds.[1]

Considering the mass of such theories formulated in the field of physics, another noted physicist, Richard Feynman, reflects:

> What of future of this adventure? What will happen ultimately? Are we going along guessing laws; how many laws are we going to have to guess? I do not know. Some of my colleagues say that this fundamental aspect of our science will go on; but I certainly think there will certainly not be perpetual novelty, say for a thousand years. This thing cannot keep on going so that we are always going to discover more and more new laws. If we do, it will become boring that there are so many levels one underneath the other.[2]

It is possible to say that this is precisely the realization the Buddha reported when he spoke of non-substantiality (*anatta*). With that realization he abandoned the search not only for certainty and objectivity but also for laws on the basis of which events could be predicted with absolute certainty. Predictability can become an obsession especially when faced with the problem of uncertainty. This is clear from the statement of the Buddha:

> Beings, dominated by prediction (*akkheyya*), established upon prediction, not understanding prediction, come under the yoke of death. However, having understood prediction, one does not assume oneself to be a fore-teller. When such a thought does not occur to him, that by which he could be spoken of, that does not exist for him.[3]

Predictability requires laws or, what a modern philosopher would call, 'observation categoricals.' Quine defines it thus:

> A generality that is compounded of observables in this way-- 'Whenever this, that'--is what I call an *observation categorical*. It is compounded of observation sentences. The 'Whenever' is not intended to reify times and

quantify over them. What is intended is an irreducible generality prior to any objective reference. It is a generality to the effect that the circumstances described in the one observation sentence are invariably accompanied by those described in the latter.[4]

Even though the Buddha formulated a principle which would explain the relationship between different experiences or 'observation sentences,' it would not be possible to call it an 'observation categorical.' The reason for this being that one of the salient features that a philosopher of science expects in the 'observation categorical,' namely, predictability with absolute certainty is not part of the Buddha's formulation of the principle. Neither the conception of non-substantiality nor the theory of conditionality would allow him the luxury of such predictability. Therefore, instead of formulating the principle as 'When this, that,' where 'that' refers to what is yet to come, the Buddha moves in the opposite direction, "When that is, this comes to be" (*imasmiṁ sati idaṁ hoti,*[5] *asmin satīdam bhavati*[6]). This move is also reflected in the very term coined by the Buddha in order to express the observed instances of phenomena. Thus, the term *paṭiccasamuppanna* refers to that which has "arisen having moved toward (the conditions)" (*prati* + *itya*). It is tracing the effect back to the cause rather than predicting the effect from the cause or causes.

Yet, the term 'dependent arising' (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) implies some generality on the basis of which a rather restrained prediction can be made. The strength of that prediction lies in its being based upon the observed, the 'dependently arisen.' It is therefore called inductive knowledge (*anvaye ñāṇa*) (see Chapter 10).

Since the general principle "When that, this" (not "when this, that") is based upon the experience of the dependently arisen, it cannot serve as a strong 'observation categorical.' All that can be said of that generality is that it has remained (part of

experience) so far. Thus, defining dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), the Buddha made the following statement:

> Whether the Buddhas were to arise or not arise, decay and death are dependent upon birth. That status (*dhātu*), that stability of phenomena (*dhammaṭṭhitatā*), that regularity in phenomena (*dhammaniyāmatā*), that conditionality (*idappaccayatā*) has remained (*thitā*). That the Buddha discovers and penetrates into; having discovered and penetrated into, (he) declares it, teaches it, makes it known, establishes it, reveals it, analyses it and clarifies it saying "Look!"[7]

With this statement, a Buddhist will propose a modification of the 'observation categorical' formulated by Quine. Since the supporting evidence for the induction constitutes experiences from 'that to this,' rather than 'this to that,' instead of saying: "It is a generality to the effect that the circumstances described in one observation sentence **are** invariably accompanied by those described in the latter," the Buddhist will say: "It is a generality to the effect that the circumstances described in the one observation sentence **have been** invariably accompanied by those described in the latter."

It is this retrospectively established generality that is defined by the four terms, 'thus-ness' or objectivity (*tathatā*), 'no-separate-true-ness' or invariability (*avitathatā*), 'non-otherwise-ness' or necessity (*anaññathatā*) and 'this-condition-ness' or conditionality (*idappaccayatā*).[8]

The second major difference between the Buddha's formulation of the principle of generality and that of a modern philosopher like Quine is that the Buddha did not intend it to be "an irreducible generality prior to any objective reference." Instead he had to retain the objective reference. Thus, any abstract statement or generalization is always concretized either by defining it or by the use of the pronominal form 'this' (*idam*). The

"Discourse on 'All' (or 'Everything') (*Sabba-sutta*) is an unequivocal rejection of any speculation on a pure universal without or prior to any reference.

> I will teach you, monks, 'all' (*sabbaṁ*)....What monks is 'all'? Eye as well as forms, ear as well as sounds, nose as well as smells, tongue as well as tastes, body as well as tangibles, mind as well as ideas--this, monks is what I call 'all'.
>
> Monks, if someone were to say: "I, having rejected that 'all', will make known another 'all,'" for him there may be a topic to speak of (*vacāvatthu*). Yet, when questioned (further) he will have no escape and will face contradiction (*vighatā*). What is its reason? Since, monks, that is not in the sphere of experience (*avisayasmiṁ*).[9]

Following this realization, the only time he made a series of universal statements, he saw to it that they were all immediately concretized.[10] Thus a statement like "All is suffering" (*sabbaṁ dukkhaṁ*), generally attributed to the Buddha by some of the later disciples as well as the non-Buddhists, would be metaphysical according to the Buddha's own view. His statements involving 'all' are always specific, as for example, "All dispositions are impermanent" or "All dispositions are suffering." The universal statement that reflects the Buddha's perspective, and often emphasized by some of the disciples who were more faithful to him,[11] is best presented in the form: "All this is suffering" (*sabbam idaṁ dukkhaṁ*). With this careful use of language the Buddha was able to keep absolutism out.

CHAPTER 10

# ANALYSIS

Analysis became a significant part of philosophical methodology in Western philosophy beginning with Bertrand Russell. He was not only the major proponent of the method but also one of its foremost practitioners. In his search for the ultimate constituents of the world, Russell utilized the method of analysis to arrive at the dualities of mind and matter as well as universals and particulars. In this respect his was not different from the search of some of the pre-Buddhist Indian philosophers who, as mentioned in Chapter 1, pursued etymological (*nirukti*) and grammatical (*vyākaraṇa*) studies in order to reach out for the particulars and the universals respectively. Even though these philosophers also recognized the duality of mind (*nāma*) and matter (*rūpa*), they were to abandon that duality soon in favour of the unity represented by *brahma*. Russell's followers like Wittgenstein utilized analysis as a means of reducing complex descriptions into elementary propositions which were then further reduced to the ultimate simples, that is, names and their combinations, that are supposed to constitute the world. This again is not much different from the world of particulars and universals. The last of the major analytical philosophers, A.J. Ayer, following the logical positivist tradition sponsored by the Vienna Circle, used linguistic analysis to demonstrate the futility of metaphysics. The death-knell of analytical philosophy was sounded when the method of analysis was confined to a mere analysis of language without any claim to discovering the truth or truths about the world of experience.

The most detailed treatment of the role of analysis in Buddhism is available in K.N. Jayatilleke's *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge* (1963). Regretfully, that treatment relies upon the commentarial tradition, especially upon Buddhaghosa,

with the result some of the statements and categories in the early Buddhist discourses relating to analysis which were rather simple and straightforward get rather complicated. I have already pointed out that certain definitions of concepts in Buddhaghosa smack of substantialism.[1] Jayatilleke is indebted to these very definitions.[2] Therefore, in the analysis of the various categories of analysis, I shall try to remain within the context of the discourses.

In the background which was seething with metaphysical speculations, once counted as sixty-two in number,[3] the Buddha was certainly compelled to resort to the analytical method. In fact, the Buddha did claim himself to be an analyst (*vibhajjavādi*), but this was dependent upon the sort of question or claim made by the inquirer.[4] Analysis was therefore not the only method he adopted. It was one of four methods. These four methods are applied to questions (*pañha*) regarding the nature of truth or reality. The four methods are as follows:

1. a question which ought to be explained categorically or directly (*ekaṁavyākaraṇīyo pañho*),
2. a question which ought to be explained analytically (*vibhjjavyākaraṇīyo pañho*),
3. a question which ought to be explained after posing a counter-question (*paṭipucchāvyākaraṇiyo pañho*), and
4. a question that should be laid aside (*thapanīyo pañho*).[5]

This means that the Buddha did not waste all his energies on analysis. There were questions to which he could give simple answers as 'yes' or 'no'. As an empiricist and one who was not overly skeptical that questions posed by every innocent inquirer are metaphysical ones, the Buddha was willing to provide direct answers to some questions. Some questions, however, were generated by concepts that got fossilized with meanings that were infected by ideologies, such as the concept of 'self (*ātman*). In such cases, the Buddha always found it necessary

to resort to analysis.[6] He also realized that some questions were raised by people who were confused by the meanings of concepts. Hence he sought clarification by asking further questions before proceeding to answer them.[7] Finally, there were the diehard metaphysicians who manipulated language and insisted on categorical answers to questions that were unanswerable in terms of experience. The Buddha responded by saying that these were questions that need to be set aside (*thapanīya*) or left unexplained (*abyākata*). For him, they were meaningless on two counts. First, they cannot be answered on the basis of experience. Secondly, they are irrelevant to the urgent problems faced by human beings (see Chapter 15).

Analysis is required in cases where simple and direct answers are not possible for one reason or another. The Buddha, unlike some of the Western analytical philosophers, recognized four different kinds of analyses. They are:

1. analysis of meaning (*attha-paṭisambhidā*),
2. analysis of morals (*dhamma-paṭisambhidā*),
3. analysis of language (*nirutti-paṭisambhidā*), and
4. analysis of knowledge (*paṭibhāna-paṭisambhidā*).

It seems that the commentators have interpreted these four types of analyses in the light of the particular philosophical problems they encountered during their days. More often these problems were the results of speculations which were not part of early Buddhism. Thus we have Jayatilleke contending with Mrs. Rhys Davids regarding the meaning of the word *attha* in *attha-paṭisambhidā*.[8] He insists that it refers to 'verbal meaning.' We have already seen how concepts, and therefore language, are involved in experience. Furthermore, the Buddha used the term *attha* in a variety of meanings. Jayatilleke's interest in interpreting *attha* as verbal meaning stems from his fear that the four kinds of analyses do not include analysis of language, which, as will be indicated below, is a problem

created by the commentators. When the Buddha spoke of *attha-paṭisambhidā*, he seems to be focusing more on the problem of experience and reference instead of worrying about language itself (see Chapter 11).

Jayatilleke meekly accepts the commentarial explanation of *dhamma-paṭisambhidā* as analysis of antecedent phenomena or causes. The interpretation of *dhamma* as causal relation emerged as a result of the sharp dichotomy between events and relations, a dichotomy that appeared in the essentialist and substantialist schools of Buddhism. We have already seen that no such sharp dichotomy is found in the early discourses. In the discourses, whenever *attha* and *dhamma* are used alongside of one another, the former referred to fact or truth and the latter meant value or good.[9] Analysis of moral concepts, not emphasized by the analysts of the modern analytical tradition, was an important part of the Buddha's doctrine. Thus it is more appropriate to take *dhamma-paṭisambhidā* as the analysis of morals.

Jayatilleke seems to be lost when he came to interpret *nirutti-paṭisambhidā*. He says: "*Nirutti-paṭisambhidā* is nowhere clearly defined in the Canonical texts. Edgerton gives 'explanation not necessarily etymological of the meaning of a word or text".[10] In spite of the *Vibhaṅga* statement that this is *abhilāpe ñāṇaṁ*,[11] that is, knowledge relating to speech, Jayatilleke was still concerned with the literal or the traditional meaning of *nirukti*. He also failed to realize that in the discourses *nirutti* did not mean **pure etymology** in the sense in which it was understood in the pre-Buddhist tradition or later Buddhism. *Nirutti* in early Buddhism, as mentioned earlier (see Chapter 6), was another term for language.

Finally, we come to the analysis of knowledge (*paṭibhāna-paṭisambhidā*). I have argued that the principle of dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), although based upon past experience of the 'dependently arisen,' permits the explanation

of new situations without running into contradiction with that experience. Taking into consideration the various occurrences of the term *paṭibhāna* (a purely Pali term similar to the Sanskrit *pratibhā*), the *PTS pali-English Dictionary* explains it as "understanding, illumination, intelligence, readiness or confidence of speech, promptitude, wit."[12] This variety of possible synonyms a lexicographer normally uses to help someone to understand a concept[13] indeed expresses the basic meaning of the term. Taken together they imply the ability on the part of someone to come up with a solution to a problem created by what would generally be considered 'unusual.' The 'unusual' is generally referred to in the early discourses as *abbhuta* (*ad+bhuta*) It is different from *abhūta* which implies 'not become,' hence false, while *bhūta* means 'become,' therefore, true. The 'unusual,' when seen in the context of the 'become' soon gets incorporated into the latter. The *paṭibhana-paṭisambhidā* therefore can be interpreted as the analysis of the 'unusual,' understanding of which is a function of knowledge (*ñāṇa*).

While it is true that the Buddha was often compelled to resort to analysis in order to clarify problems relating to truth, it is also evident that he did not pursue such analyses to their logical extremes. The reason for this was that he gave priority to experience rather than to logical thinking. Thus, as mentioned earlier (see Chapter 4), he refused to make sharp distinctions between wisdom (*paññā*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*), feeling (*vedanā*) and perception (*saññā*) on the basis of endless analysis (*vinibbhujitvā vinibbhujitvā*).

CHAPTER 11

# LANGUAGE AND TRUTH

The Buddha had much difficulty expressing his conception of truth. Generally it was believed that truth is what exists *(sat)*, hence the Indian term for truth is *satya*. Untruth then would be non-existence *(asat)* or *asatya*. This is a rather innocent belief. However, when the question of truth is associated with the search for ultimate objectivity, things get more complicated. The Indian traditions before the Buddha were all concerned with such objectivity.[1] In more recent times, this form of objectivity of truth has been challenged by philosophers who are willing to recognize the objectivity of content. In order to do so they have been compelled to abandon the two-valued logic of existence and non-existence.[2]

The Buddha seems to have realized that this search for ultimate objectivity stood in the way of determining what is true in a genuinely empiricist way. How does one go about deciding what exists? The essentialist is compelled to say."Give me the impression." Impression implies immediacy, and when that immediacy is subjected to a logical analysis, one ends up with a rather atomistic notion of truth as it was in the case of Hume or Russell. The substantialist perspective which considers truth to be timeless gives rise to the notion of substance, the pervasive element behind all phenomenal appearances. How the two branches of linguistic studies, etymology and grammar, contributed to or justified such notions of truth have already been noted (see Chapter 1). The Buddha's conception of truth occupied a middle position between these two extremes.

He needed to account for some measure of objectivity without sacrificing too much of the variegated factors involved in sensory experience. Remaining within the context of that experience he wanted to recognize change and transformation

as part of truth. These processes of change and transformation would be meaningless without the accommodation of new events, new situations, new conditions and new effects. As such, the conception of truth had to maintain "maximum continuity and minimum jolt." Truth was not to be a museum-piece. It had to be something useful, something that 'works' without being confined to a particular time. Finally, it had to lead to some meaningful and satisfactory end. As such, it was partly teleological. To come up with a definition of truth that would cater to all these requirements was not easy. If enlightenment was that of an individual, as it was the case with the Buddha, but not of a tradition which was constituted of different individuals, as represented by the period of enlightenment in the Western world, there could be coherence in the manner in which all these issues mentioned above are resolved. The Buddha's enlightenment provided a coherence rarely witnessed in any philosophical tradition.

A sense of objectivity is expressed by at least two terms, *tathatā*[3] and *taccha*,[4] both being abstract nouns formed from the word *tathā*, meaning 'such.' Nurtured in the Kantian tradition, some of the early Western scholars who were involved in the study of Buddhism thought that *tathata*, rendered into English as 'suchness,' represented the thing-in-itself that Kant left as unknowable through sense experience. This trend has continued until the present day gaining momentum, especially through the writings of the famous Vedāntin, T. R. V. Murti, who saw a remarkable similarity between Kant and Nāgārjuna. I have already provided sufficient evidence from the early discourses to the effect that the Buddha remained grounded in sense experience without abandoning it for the sake of a transcendent intuition. Thus, the truth that the Buddha spoke of is not something to be shared only by those who have reached the highest pedestals of yogic concentration. It is something that can be shared by all human beings who are wise *(viññū)*,[5] with eyes to see *(cakkhumā)*[6] and

who are not blinded *(andhabhūta)* by the net of metaphysical views.[7] Hence the Buddha's request to the people to "come and take a look" *(ehipassika)*.[8] How the Buddha explained sense experience as a valid source of knowledge and what the object of that experience has already been noted (Chapter 4).

The fact that the term *taccha,* implying objectivity, is used along with another term, *bhūta,*[9] meaning what which 'has come to be,' to refer to truth provides the clearest evidence that the Buddha was not presenting an absolutist, essentialist or substantialist notion of truth. *Bhūta* or 'become' implies change or transformation. Truth therefore is not a static entity, an essence or substance, but one subject to change or transformation, Furthermore, it may be remembered that the term *bhuta* is a past participle and, therefore, expresses the temporary completion of the process of change or transformation. This temporary completion is prompted by human interest as well as the need to speak about it. Truth as 'the become' will remain solidified as long as that human interest lasts. With changes in human interests, old truths may be redefined or replaced by new ones. Thus, it has been held that all the intellectual developments are due to human conception.[10] This continuity in change and transformation is therefore called 'becoming' *(bhava)*. Thus, comparable to the two concepts of 'the dependently arisen' *(paṭiccasamuppanna)* and "dependent arising' *(paṭiccasamuppāda)*, we have the concepts of 'the become' *(bhūta)* and 'becoming' *(bhava)*.

The process of becoming is open-ended, for it is not even within the power of the enlightened one to predict with certainty what follows except on the basis of what has transpired so far. Leaving it open-ended does not mean accepting indeterminism as the process that governs the evolution of the world. The Buddha had already rejected any explanation of the world in terms of indeterminism *(adhiccasamuppāda)*.[11] The world process, when uninterrupted by the human dispositions *(saṅkhāra)*, follows the natural principle of dependent arising. It is the human disposition that

changes the course of events. Hence an understanding of the manner in which human dispositions function provides clues to the possible manner in which 'becoming' takes place. An enlightened human being is the best qualified to understand that process. Truth thus comprehends not only what happens as natural occurrences *(paṭiccasamuppanna)*, but also what comes to be dispositionally conditioned *(saṅkhata)*. Becoming *(bhava)* includes both. Truth is being made all the time.

Truth is therefore not timeless in the sense of being eternal and unchanging. It is simply not seasonal or confined to any particular time *(akālika)*. It is not independent of or separated from time *(kālavimutta)*, as some of the later Buddhists conceived of it.[12]

As long as human dispositions are involved in this process of becoming, truth as 'being made' cannot escape goal-directedness. The continuous process of setting up goals, whether they are achieved or not, is noticeable not only on scientific endeavours but also in social, political, economic and moral spheres. Truth therefore is not merely what exists, but also what can be achieved. This fact is also reflected in the use of the term *attha* in the sense of both meaning and goal or purpose.

This leads to one of the most crucial aspects of truth in the Buddha's doctrine. *Attha*, in addition to its meaning as goal or purpose, also carries the implication of meaningfulness in the sense of fruitfulness, welfare, etc. While material welfare was looked upon as an important requirement, the Buddha emphasized the need for combining it with the moral welfare of human beings. These, for the Buddha, were complementary aspects of the criterion determining the notion of truth, hence often referred to together as what "contributed to material welfare" *(atthasaṁhita)* and what "contributes to moral welfare" *(dhammasaṁhita)*.[13] The latter places a restraint on the former. This restraint is intended to curtail human greed for

pleasures of sense and material life, a greed that can be generated by, say, a universal truth of economics such as "supply and demand." But more importantly it is meant to bring about peace in the world and the individual. Thus we have a description of the Buddha or anyone who practises the ten virtues as one who "abandoning confusing speech (or falsehood, *musā*), refrained from confusing speech, speaks the truth, is truthful, is objective, trustworthy, and is without conflict in the world."[14] According to the Buddha, any notion of truth that contributes to conflict and strife among human beings does not deserve to be considered truth. This is one reason for his reluctance to make statements that are true, yet unfruitful.[15] For him, dogma and truth are not the same.

Presenting a conception of truth that fulfills all these requirements was no easy task. A static notion of truth can be easily handled. There is an experience and there is a corresponding expression for it. Discover the right correspondence, the question of truth is settled. This wild-goose chase has occupied the energies of philosophers for centuries. Truth as coherence deals primarily with expression and has little concern for the problem of experience. One of the first to decry this intellectual creed in the Western world was William James.[16]

In addition to the fourfold analysis mentioned in Chapter 10, the Buddha adopted various measures to maintain some balance between language and truth. That balance could be maintained only when concepts, and hence language, are kept sufficiently flexible so as to be in tune with the very experiences from which they derive their meaning. The simile of the raft was applied to both the doctrine and its statement.

A great deal of controversy has surrounded the problem of meaning and truth in the early discourses as well as in the later Buddhist traditions. The conception of two truths, the conventional and the ultimate were appearing on the scene during the period represented by the Middle and Late

*Upaniṣads* as well as in Jainism and Ājīvika doctrines some of which were contemporary with the Buddha.[17] In spite of the total absence of such a dichotomy in the early discourses, the interpreters of the early doctrine who relied heavily on the commentaries of Buddhaghosa have continued to attribute two truths to the Buddha himself.[18] There occurs one single reference to two types of discourses *(sutta)*: *nītattha* and *neyyattha* with no further explanation.[19] All that the Buddha said was that some people confuse these two types of discourses and, as a result, find fault with the Buddha. Buddhaghosa found this statement to be a convenient means of introducing the concept of two truths, the conventional *(sammuti)* and ultimate or absolute *(paramattha)* that had evolved during the course of a millennium of speculation. *Neyyatta* is therefore taken to be the ordinary language that utilizes substantialist ideas like 'I,' 'myself,' 'person,' 'self' and 'soul,' while *nītattha* is taken to be the discourses where the Buddha emphasizes impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non-substantiality that reduce those concepts to their ultimate constituents like the aggregates.[20] This is the reason why modern Buddhist scholars have rendered the former as "indirect meaning" or "symbolic meaning" and the latter as "direct meaning" or "literal meaning."[21] More recently it has been suggested that the enlightened one's language is the latter, and that the former is utilized for pedagogical reasons.[22] Interestingly, the two terms *sammuti* and *paramattha* are never used in the discourses as adjectives qualifying truth *(sacca)*.

Considering what we have said so far regarding language and truth in early Buddhism, it would be possible to give a totally different explanation of the two terms *nītattha* and *neyyattha* without introducing two levels of truth. The past participle *nita* (from the toot *ni*, *nayati*, 'to lead') means that to which one "has been led" and the term *neyya* (a potential participial form of the same verb) implies that to which one "ought to lead." When these two terms are prefixed to the term

*attha* or meaning, we have a meaning that has been led to, that is, a meaning (temporarily) completed, and a meaning that ought to lead, that is, a meaning stretched into the future. This is not the least different from the distinction that we have noticed so far between 'the dependently arisen' and 'dependent arising' or 'the become' and 'becoming.' One is a conception of truth formulated on the basis of information available so far and the other is a conception of truth grounded on the information available and extended into the unknown future. As such, these two types of discourses have nothing to do with conventional and ultimate truths, If there were to be an inordinate desire to relate the two types of discourses to the concept of truth, then the most appropriate route to take would be to identify the *neyyattha* with the first, second and fourth of the four noble truths and *nītattha* with the third. Even then it would not generate the meanings sought for by the transcendentalists as conventional and ultimate, for the third truth is not related to the other three truths in that sense. If it did, then we will have a sharp dichotomy between *saṁsāra* and *nirvāna.*

According to this conception of meaning and truth, the present is explained in terms of the specious present, while the future is inferred on the basis of that specious present. If these two types of statement are confused, it would bring about chaos in the Buddha's doctrine because the essentialism, substantialism and absolutism that he tried to evade would return with vengeance as it happened within the three centuries after his death.[23]

CHAPTER 12

# LOGIC OF BECOMING

On the basis of what has been said about the Buddha's conception of truth, it is evident that he could not subscribe to a system of rationality based upon the 'logic of existence' *(sat)*. He could only accept a 'logic of becoming *(bhava)*'. But there was no such system in the pre-Buddhist tradition. Some argue that the Jainas did formulate such a system of logic that took into account 'possibilities,' not merely what exists, and therefore were the originators of non-absolutist logic in the Indian context. However, a careful examination of Jaina logic seems to indicate that this is not the case (Chapter 1). A comparison of Jaina logic with the system proposed by the Buddha should clarify the manner in which the latter completely avoided the 'logic of existence', that is, the two-valued logic based upon a sharp dichotomy between 'existence' and 'non-existence,' while the former worked within that system.

If we are to consider the assertions made in the Jaina system, without reference to the propositions connected by the assertions (as in Chapter 1), we will have the following:

1. It is possible that it is *(syad asti)*.
2. It is possible that it is not *(syad nasti)*.
3. It is possible that it is and is not *(syād asti ca nasti ca)*.
4. It is possibly indescribable *(syād avaktavyaḥ)*.

Except in 4, we have the assertion of existence *(asti, sat)* or non-existence *(nāsti, asat)*; 3 being a combination of both existence and non-existence which, of course, would be a contradiction according to two -valued system of logic. Number 4 in this system is comparable to the so-called excluded middle, that is, neither existence nor non-existence. What is interesting in the Jaina system is that it is not prepared

to leave it as a mere excluded middle. Even what is excluded has to be accounted for. Hence the three other steps.

5. It is possible that it exists and is indescribable *(syād asti ca avaktavyaḥ).*

6. It is possible that it does not exist and is indescribable *(syād nāsti ca avaktavyaḥ).*

7. It possible that it exists and does not exist and is indescribable *(syād asti ca nāsti ca avaktavyaḥ).*

This means that the excluded middle either exists or does not exist or is both. The determination to remain within the 'logic of existence' is clearly evident.

In contrast to this, the Buddha has only three possibilities. His explanation is as follows:

> I **know** what has been seen, heard, thought, cognized, attained, sought, and reflected upon by the people, including the recluses and brahmans. If I **know** what has been seen. .. by the people... and if I were to say, " I do not know it," that would be confusion *(musā)* on my part. If I were to say, "[It is both that] I know it and I do not know it," that too would be confusion on my part. [However,] if I were to say, "[It is both that] I neither know it nor do not know it," I would be committing a sin *(kali)* on my part.[1]

From the above statement it is evident that the Buddha was attempting to get out of the "logic of existence" and replace it with a 'logic of becoming.' If, as explained in Chapter 9, what is true *(sacca)* is what has become *(bhūta),* then what is false is not what does not exist, but what has not yet become *(abhūta),* this latter being the term for false, not non-existence *(asacca).* Thus, in the Buddha's discourses we do not get the true/false *(sacca/asacca, satya/asatya)* dichotomy implying existence and non-existence that dominated the pre-Buddhist period. Instead we have the 'become'/'not-become' *(bhūta/abhūta)* distinction.

But the 'not become' cannot be considered false in the sense of being non-existent, period. All that it means is that something has been non-existent or has not been the case so far.

The question as to why something considered to be true at one point of time turns out to be false at a subsequent time has puzzled philosophers. However, the manner in which they have addressed the epistemological issues has been an obstacle to understanding the problem. Their search for ultimate objectivity and certainty precluded them from sympathetically looking at the limitations of human experience. Even when they realized such limitations, they were moving elsewhere in the epistemological arena searching for objectivity and certainty. Logic has been the last bastian of this enterprise. Hence the survival of the true/false dichotomy until the post-modern period in Western philosophy.

The foremost challenge the Buddha had to face was the manner in which truth-value accorded to something that 'has become' *(bhūta)* could be preserved without undermining the possibility of assigning some truth-value to what 'has not yet become' *(abhūta)*. Instead of starting with the ontological puzzle, the Buddha began with the epistemological. It seemed to him that calling the 'not become' false is to place the blame on the ontological side. Therefore, he decided to refer to it as 'confusion' *(musā)*. The reason for this confusion is two-fold. First, it is the belief in absolute laws which were formulated by philosophers as well as scientists who were interested in explaining or predicting future events. In the Western world, a warning against this by David Hume fell on deaf ears. Secondly, the inveterate belief in substances and qualities, in spite of the limitations of experience, has contributed to similar frustrations. These two reasons, both involving beliefs, prompted the Buddha to highlight the epistemological rather than the ontological aspect of the concept of false. The false implying non-existence is simply confusion caused by these two beliefs.

Having highlighted the epistemological issues involved in something being considered false, the ontological and linguistic issues are then dealt with. Thus, the synonyms for 'confusion' *(musā)* are 'empty' *(tuccha)* and 'deviant speech' *(vilāpa)*[2]. The former emphasizes the absence of laws or substances, and the latter, the transgression of linguistic expression. The false is thus not simple non-existence, but the 'confusion,' sometimes referred to as 'perversion' *vipallāsa)*, produced by "perceiving, thinking and viewing what is impermanent as permanent" and by "perceiving, thinking and viewing what is non-substantial as being substantial."[3]

In the *Sutta-nipāta,* the Buddha constantly reminded us that what is called truth relates at least partly to what we are interested in knowing, to what we have put together dispositionally *(saṅkhata)* (see Chapter 11).

With the above definition of the false, the Buddha could include it as well as the so-called contradictory under the same category, hence his reference to both as 'confusion' *(musā).* In this sense both can be called contraries. This may be unacceptable to someone looking for clarity and precision,[4] but it resonates well with the non-absolutist conception of truth. This approach also eliminates the either/or alternatives that dominated substantialist thinking.

Interestingly, the genuinely false is referred to as *kali.* This is a statement that implies both neither/nor which, in the Indian context, specifically meant the 'unspeakable' *(avaktavya),* as is seen from its profuse use in the Jaina system of logic. It may be noted that the Buddha's term for the false emphasizes 'destruction,' 'sin,' etc. The term has not been used in this context either before or after the Buddha and is indicative of his strongest criticism of it. For him, it implies epistemological sin. The reason for this is his understanding of the extremely close relationship between experience and concepts or language (see Chapter 4). He seems to have perceived 'unspeakability' as a rejection of experience itself.

Furthermore, if neither/nor is understood in the way in which it is interpreted in Western logic as implying the Excluded Middle, the Buddha would still have difficulty with it. Neither/nor is based upon the absolutist logic of either/or, true/false dichotomy. The Buddha who rejected such dichotomies could not subscribe to an Excluded Middle. The **middle**, in his view is not something to be excluded. It is one that needs to be highlighted. To leave the middle **unidentified** is as sinful as not speaking about it.

The Buddha's non-absolutist logic or the 'logic of becoming' therefore could have only three alternatives: true, contrary and contradictory. Utilizing the symbolism adopted by the logical traditions, we thus have the following alternatives:

1. p (true),
2. ~ p (contrary),
3. (p.~ p) or p. ~p (contrary), and
4. ~ (p.~p) (contradictory); ~ p.~ ~ p (excluded middle, unsatisfactory).

Contrary is thus tolerable because it is 'confusion' *(musa)*. It allows for the possibility of new concepts of truth being formulated without doing much damage to the older ones. It enables us to move on with "maximum continuity and minimum jolt." But the contradictory is unacceptable because it is denial of both experience and expressions.

Another important aspect of the Buddha's logic of becoming' is the rejection of deduction. In the first place, he found it to be untrustworthy. A mere emphasis on the **form** of an argument *(ākāra -parivitakka)* independent of the **content** is a mistake, for the argument could be either well-formulated *(sutakkita)* or ill-formulated *(duttakita)*, it could conform to facts *(tathā pi hoti)* or not conform to facts *(aññathā pi hoti)*.[5] Secondly, with the rejection of absolute universals or laws, the major premise of a deductive argument needs to be formulated differently. The famous example of a deductive argument from Western logic reads:

All men are mortal.
Socrates is a man.
Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

Even though the argument here is valid, the major premise as stated is questionable. If we are to be faithful to the teachings of the Buddha, the major premise needs to be reformulated as:

All men have been mortal,

and the deduction thereby loses its strength. It is for this reason that the Buddha maintained that his doctrine is 'not within the sphere of deductive reasoning' *(atakkāvacara)*.[6]

Considering the rich and varied philosophical atmosphere during the Buddha's day, and the references to constant philosophical debates,[7] it is possible that logic was an important part of these debates. It is also possible that what came to be known as system of logic or *nyāya* was known to him. He was certainly aware of the term *anumāna* which became the key term for inference subsequently. *Nyāya* (from *ni,* to 'lead') emphasized prediction, while *anumāna* (from *ánu* + root *mā*,'to measure accordingly') represented a guessing game. However, there are only two references to *anumāna* in the early discourses despite its popularity during a later period. The first and the most prominent is in the "Discourse on Inference" *(Anumāna-sutta)*, translated by Miss. I.B. Horner as " Discourse on Measuring in Accordance with."[8]

> Therein,your reverences, oneself ought to be measured *(anuminitabbaṁ)* by oneself thus. That person of evil desire and who is in the thrall of evil desires, that person is displeasing and disagreeable to me; and similarly, if I were to be of evil desire and in the thrall of evil desires, I should be displeasing and disagreeable to others.[9]

This measuring is an inference, drawing a deduction, making an evaluation or a calculation. It is a guessing game,

more like the probability of induction in C.S. Peirce.[10] It was to some extent an acceptable inference because of its moral implications. This was the only context or time when the Buddha utilized it. His reluctance to use it more often seems to be indicated by his second reference to *anumāna*. It is a rather terse statement where the passive verb *anumīyati* occurs:

> Whatever... one leans on to, that is being measured, whatever is being measured, by that reckoning (or conceiving) takes place.[11].

The implication is that the measuring is more often made in terms of one's commitments *(anusaya)* whether they be likes or dislikes. He wanted the induction to be strongly grounded in experience. This is why he was not prepared to infer the 'uncaused' from the 'caused,' the 'unmoved' from the 'moved,' the 'eternal' from the 'changeable' or the 'necessary' from the 'contingent.'

By describing a relation *(paccaya)* as part of experience, the Buddha was able to have more confidence regarding the nature of the relation itself than the essentialists, some of whom, as mentioned earlier, either denied it or sought different means of knowing it. The past experience of a relation is still not an absolutely foolproof condition for predicting the future. The Buddha therefore abandoned the hope of predicting something with absolute certainty, a hope that continues to keep the modern scientific enterprise energized. He remarked:

> Beings, dominated by prediction *(akkheyya),* established upon prediction, not understanding prediction, come under the yoke of death. However, having understood prediction, one does not assume oneself to be a fore-teller. When such a thought does not occur to him, that by which he could be spoken, that does not exist for him.[12]

On the one hand, this is a staggering blow to the belief in absolute laws formulated in the predictive sciences or systems of thought. On the other hand, it is not a total rejection of

prediction, as the essentialist Hume proposed, but an appeal to understand the nature, function and limitations of prediction and utilize it in a restrained and useful manner.

Thus, the processes of experience and induction are not sharply distinguished. It is significant to note that the Buddha refers to both of them as knowledge *(ñāna)*. The former is knowledge of dependently arisen phenomena *(paṭiccasamuppanna dhamma)* where the phenomenon is emphasized; hence called knowledge of phenomena *(dhamme ñāṇa)*.[13] The latter is knowledge of dependent arising *(paṭiccasamuppāda)* where dependence is highlighted; hence called inductive knowledge *(anvaye ñāṇa)*.[14] It is on the basis of the principle of dependent arising, which is grounded in experience, that the Buddha made inductive inferences into the obvious past and the future *(atītānāgate nayaṁ neti)*.[15] Because of the limitations of inductive knowledge, the Buddha was not committed to absolute predictablity. In the absence of absolute predictability he was not willing to subscribe to or assert any absolute truths. He condemned those who argued that "This alone is true, anything else is false" *(idam eva saccaṁ mogham aññaṁ)* as empty-headed persons *(moghapurisa)*.[16] The principle obtained through induction is only a regularity, not an absolute law.

CHAPTER 13

# LANGUAGE OF MORALS

Considering the speculations of the pre-Buddhist Brahmanical philosophers, it becomes evident that when truth is defined as what exists (*sat*), the Upaniṣadic term for what exists subjectively as well as objectively being *ātman*, a further attempt had to be made to accommodate morals. This was an independent pursuit that left them with the conception of *brahma*. Thereby we have the creation of a duality which is ultimately resolved through the admission that both are parts of a non-dual reality. A similar concept of truth upheld by the materialist thinkers led to a total negation of moral discourse. Since the concept of truth is embedded in the language itself, it becomes difficult to speak of morals. One cannot speak of the existence of values in the same way as one speaks of tables and chairs, rivers and mountains, substances and qualities. When faced with this problem some of the moral philosophers, Eastern and Western, resorted to a language of abstraction. Plato's emphasis on Forms, with its pyramidal ascent to the Ultimate Form, the Good, is a good example of this language of abstraction. Centuries later, a prominent philosopher of language, Bhartṛhari, arrived at the very same Platonic solution in order to place the concept of *brahma* at the top of the pyramid. In the modern period, Immanuel Kant, who was determined to give morality its rightful place in philosophical discussions, actually contributed to the devaluation of moral discourse as a result of his inordinate emphasis on the absolute autonomy of the will. Since Kant, the meaning of moral discourse depended upon the status of the free-will. The failure to prove the existence of such an autonomous will meant the failure of moral theory to gain credibility. Emotivism gained momentum and reigned supreme for a while.

The Buddha was striking at the root of the problem when he

insisted that there is no permanent and eternal truth represented by the terms 'I' (*ahaṁ* and 'thou' (*tvaṁ*), terms that were profusely used in the active voice in the languages of his day. One of the most important admonitions he gave to his disciples is to refrain from speculations, reflections or thoughts that assert: "Thinker, therefore, I am" (*mantā asmīti sabbaṁ uparundhe*).[1] Unless one realizes the nature of linguistic expression, the concepts of 'I' and 'thou' are liable to generate strong senses of identity and difference respectively, and both are inimical to moral discourse. The same applies to the notions of essence or substance relating to the things of the world. The Buddha realized that the moral sensitivity required of a person who wishes to practice the fourfold 'higher abidings' (*brahmavihāra*), namely, friendliness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekha*), are not easily generated by one who is enamoured of extreme notions of identity and difference. The Buddha's theory of non-substantiality (*anatta*) was intended to eliminate such extreme beliefs and provide a foundation for the principle of dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) which is the very basis of moral discourse. The Buddha assumed that he could utilize the terms 'I' and 'thou' to refer to an empirical self without fear of giving the impression that these referred to metaphysical ones because he had already emphasized the flexibility of concepts (Chapter 3), the limitations of experience (Chapter 4) as well as the nature and function of linguistic expression (Chapter 6).

Defusing the absolute concepts of identity and difference was not sufficient. The moral discourse had to be couched in a language that avoided the conception of 'existence,' for the latter brought about the more cumbersome problem of the fact/value distinction.

Thus, one of the first steps the Buddha took was to use the same term to refer to facts and values. This is the term *dhamma*. In the early discourses, the plural term *dhammā* refers to experienced facts[2] as well as values.[3] In its singular use as

*dhammo*, it refers to the principle of dependence which appears as the causal principle explaining the world of facts[4] and again as the moral principle derived from individual actions.[5] When the discourse on facts (*dhamma*) is also a discourse on values (*dhamma*), whatever naturalness (*dhammatā*) is associated with the world of phenomena is also found in the moral domain.

> This is the nature (*dhammatā*), monks, of a person of right view: Whatever kind of offence he falls into he makes known the removal of such an offence, for he confesses it, discloses it, declares it quickly to the Teacher or to intelligent fellow *brahma*-farers; having confessed, disclosed and declared it, he comes to restraint in the future. Just as an innocent little baby lying on its back quickly draws back its hand or foot if it has touched a live ember--even so, monks, this is the nature of a person endowed with right view... restraint in the future.[6]

It is possible that even such an attempt to ward off substantialist interpretations of facts and values could fail. Therefore it was necessary to highlight the gradual evolution of the moral life beginning with the simple virtues and reaching up to the highest ideal. The progression in the path is not viewed in the form of a stair-way or a ladder where one takes one step, leaves it and gets on the next, until one reaches the top, after which one is ready to kick the ladder. Instead, progression is understood as a gradual refinement of one's knowledge, character and behaviour.

Such a process of refinement implies a beginning, a middle and a conclusion without chopping them up into three distinct constituents. The virtues (*sīla*) constitutes the beginning (*adi*), the noble eightfold path represents the middle (*majjha*) and freedom (*nibbāna*) stands as the conclusion (*pariyosāna*), and these three stages are blended together in such a way that the path becomes one harmonious whole.

The virtues are fivefold for the lay person and tenfold for one who has renounced the lay life. The fivefold virtues, presented in the form of abstentions and cultivations, are based upon a basic understanding that greed and hatred are not helpful even in achieving one's own happiness. The ordinary example of the grocer at the corner of the street who is better off in the long run by being honest to his customers and keeping his profits low rather than ripping them off, shows that selfishness is not served by selfishness. The knowledge that dependence rather than total independence is the basis for a harmonious community life does not require sophisticated philosophical justification. The five additional virtues recommended for the person who has renounced the household life are more or less reminders that that person has a higher moral commitment.

When we come to the middle, which consists of various practices, the noble eightfold path being the most popular and comprehensive,[7] we find the virtues mentioned earlier are incorporated in it under four factors: right conception, right speech, right action, and right livelihood. In other words, whatever virtues a person cultivates when setting out on the path are not abandoned. However, this time they are to be practiced with a more refined epistemological perspective, namely, an understanding of the four noble truths. This is the function of right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*).[8]

The conclusion of the path, which is the attainment of freedom (*nibbāna*), is then connected with the middle by the recognition of right mindfulness and right concentration, which lead to freedom, as constituents of the path. As will be seen in Chapter 14, reaching the ultimate goal does not represent an abandoning of all the virtues and morals constituting the beginning and the middle of the path.

The difference between the beginning and middle, on the one hand, and the conclusion of the path, on the other, is expressed by the person who is traversing the path and the one

who has traversed the path respectively. The former is referred to as one who 'has entered the proper path' or the 'well-behaved' (*supaṭipanna*) and the latter as 'the well-gone' (*sugata*).[9]

The character of the path and of the goal are better defined when the various practices constituting the path are said to be circumscribed (*pariyāya*), whereas the goal is not so circumscribed (*nippariyaya*).[10] The reason for the adoption of the language of circumscription to describe the various practices that constitutes the path is that the Buddha wanted the language of moral to be compatible with the language he utilized in formulating his conception of truth or reality. If what is true and what is real are defined in terms of what 'has come to be' (*bhūta*), and what 'has come to be' is 'dependently arisen' (*paṭiccasamuppanna*), then there is no possibility of determining with absolute precision and certainty where the process will end. One is at the mercy of inductive knowledge (see Chapter 12). As such, the most prudent thing to do is to work within a circumscribed context, one with a limited boundary, deal with one problem at a time following the instructions or ideas presented by someone who has already reached the goal.

In presenting the path and the goal in this manner, the Buddha overcame the difficulty mentioned above, namely, the tendency to look for morals as existents, as was done by the Brahmanical thinkers with *brahma* and Plato with his conception of Good, by insisting that moral perfection is a goal rather than a reality. Thus, freedom or nirvana is the ultimate goal (*paramattha*) rather than an ultimate reality. This is an extremely difficult and subtle distinction to make, especially when it has to be formulated or expressed linguistically. The problem associated with the process of deductive inference appears here (see Chapter 12). If nirvana were to be the ultimate reality, then by implication this reality ought to be reflected at the level of the particular. A deductive argument is

based upon the guarantee that the universal and the particular are related. Thus, if nirvana is an ultimate reality, then by implication every individual ought to be able to attain nirvana at some point of time. The nirvanic element is already there in the individual. There is no evidence in the early discourses that the Buddha ever held such a view. According to him, only those who have destroyed at least the first three of the fetters (*saṁyojana*) of becoming, that is, the belief in a permanent and eternal self (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), restless doubt (*vicikicchā*) and grasping on to the virtues and rituals (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*), and thereby attained the stage of 'stream-entrant' (*sotāpanna*), are destined (*niyata*) to attain nirvana.[11] This is a person who has travelled a long way and who has the goal in sight. But the ordinary person only has a map that could guide him. Possessing that map is no guarantee that he will find that destination.[12] The language used by the Buddha to describe a wayfarer is thus extremely significant. Speaking of the practice of the virtues, he stated: "Be virtuous, but not made of virtues" (*sīlavā, no ca sīlamayo*).[13] The former practices the virtues in the hope of reaching a goal. The latter is in possession of virtues which are part of the ultimate reality. The former embodies the spirit of the inductive principle whereas the latter reflects the principle of deduction.

The Buddha also avoided another problem confronted by classical Indian materialist thinkers as wel as some of the modern philosophers of science in dealing with morals. The materialists, of course, denied the reality of consciousness, reducing it to a mere by-product of matter. Hence they can be classed as epi-phenomenalists. However, there are some philosophers of science as well as of language who recognize human consciousness, emotions, etc. on the basis of their own experiences but who are reluctant to attribute them to others. They insist that these are known only through public expression. While they are willing to make inferences of one sort or another when explaining overt human behaviour, they

are unwilling to make any inferences regarding the mental activities or constitution of people other than themselves. While the Buddha admitted certain telepathic capacities recognized in the contemplative tradition of his day, his humanistic moral philosophy called for a method of judging the thought processes of others even though, under normal circumstances, they are not directly given. Thus we have the only occasion when the Buddha utilized the the mode of 'measuring in accordance with' (*anumāna*) which, as explained in Chapter 12, is more of a calculation or a guessing game, but such a calculation was looked upon as being valuable in spite of its shortcomings because moral discourse is not intended for only those who have developed telepathic insights.

CHAPTER 14

# LANGUAGE OF FREEDOM

Even a cursory glance at a general index to an English translation of the *Upaniṣads*, the most comprehensive being R.E. Hume's *The Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads*, a reader cannot fail to notice the paucity or the lack of any reference to the ethical implications of the concept of *brahman*.[1] The references are mostly to *brahman* as the earliest entity, as the ultimate world-ground, as being immanent in the world and in all beings, as being one quarter phenomenal and three quarters immortal and inaccessible, as having two forms, as a conglomerate mass, as being inconceivable and incomprehensible, as the self of the gods, as the reality in all beings, as a knowledge mass, as the unification of everything, as one to be identified with the *ātman*, as an emanation from the primeval, as the all-inclusive, as both Being and non-being, as one that develops the antithesis of existence, as manifest in cosmic and personal functions, as the great object of desire, as higher and lower, as the conjectural First Cause, as revealed in the body through meditation, as the limitless, etc., etc. Someone interested in examining the ethical implications of this ultimate moral ideal will rarely find a reference here, and therefore will not even venture to go back to the text itself looking for it, for the translator who spent a major part of his life learning the language and translating the texts did not find one worthy of mention.

Among the various reasons for the absence of any discussion of the ethical implications of the concept of *brahman*, two appear to be prominent. First is the desire on the part of the Upaniṣadic thinker to present *brahman* as the ultimate reality, hence the emphasis on the language of 'existence.' Second is the transcendent perspective from which the highest moral ideal was perceived, a perspective that

became more prominent later on when *brahman* was considered to be beyond both good and bad.

Furthermore, the difference between the Buddha's language of morals and that of the substantialist Upaniṣadic tradition is further exemplified by the manner in which they described a person who has attained the goal. Whereas in the *Upaniṣads* there are claims like "I am *brahma*" (*ahaṁ brahma sami*)[2] or "That thou art" (*tat tvam asi*),[3] the Buddha remained with the language of becoming using phrases like "become *brahma*" (*brahma-bhūta*) or "become *dhamma*" (*dhamma-bhūta*).[4] Described in this way, it is the end of a journey rather than the acquisition of an existing reality. From the above description it may be construed that after all the Buddha accepted the Upaniṣadic conception of *brahman*. This would be rather wishful thinking. For the Buddha, *brahman* represented no more than 'nobility' or 'worthiness' (*ariya*) and is identical with the good (*dhamma*) as opposed to evil (*adhamma*). In contrast, the Upaniṣadic concept of *dharma*, its interpretation in the *Bhagavadgītā* as 'duty' being correct, is a creation of *brahman* or is derived from the all-pervasive *brahman* that determined the duties of each human person born into this world. The Buddha's doctrine, which denounced any such conception of duty, recognized the possibility of any human being setting up a goal and striving for it, even though he did not expect every human being to do so because of his/her dominant interests, this latter also being conditioned by various factors some of which may be beyond one's control.

Without using the language used by his contemporaries in the Upaniṣadic tradition to describe the status of the person who has attained freedom (*nibbāna*), the Buddha wanted to explain that status in a manner consistent with his description of the moral path outlined in Chapter 13. It was mentioned that the path represents a gradual evolution of the moral life beginning with simple virtues and reaching up to the highest

ideal. It was also said that the progression in the path was understood as a gradual refinement of one's knowledge, character and behaviour. If freedom is the conclusion or the ultimate goal of that path, then that freedom also should represent the ultimate perfection with regard to knowledge, character and behaviour. This is precisely what one can discover in the Buddha's language of freedom.

The highest form of knowledge the Buddha claimed is referred to as *paññā* (Sk. *prajñā*), generally translated into English as 'wisdom.' Its function is to 'spew out influxes' (*āsavakkhaya*).[5] The term 'influx' (*āsava*, from *ā* + root *sru*, 'to flow') could leave the impression that something flows into the perceiving mind which is originally pure and luminous and which, as a result, gets polluted. Elsewhere we have pointed out that this was a wrong understanding of the Buddha's conception of mind.[6] However, the term *āsava* occurs along with two other terms with psychological implications. They are *vighāta* and *pariḷāha*.[7] *Vighāta* can mean 'conflict,' and therefore 'distress.' *Pariḷāha* means 'fever,' 'perspiring,' and therefore 'discomfort.' We therefore need to analyse the implications of the four types of *āsavas* referred to in the discourses in the light of these psychological concepts of 'distress' and 'discomfort.'

The four influxes are listed as follows:

1. the influx of desire for sense-pleasures (*kāmāsava*),
2. the influx of becoming (*bhavāsava*),
3. the influx of views (*diṭṭhāsava*), and
4. the influx of ignorance (*avijjāsava*).[8]

The third is sometimes omitted, and it is possible that it is then subsumed under the fourth.[9] The question one needs to raise at this point is, Why are the so-called 'influxes' reasons for distress and discomfort? The non-satisfaction of one's

desires for pleasures of sense (*kāma*) is a cause for distress and discomfort. Pleasures of sense have limited satisfaction (*appassāda*).[10] Expecting unlimited satisfaction from such limited pleasures of sense leads to distress and discomfort, which is suffering (*dukkha*). Becoming (*bhava*) or the constant attempt to be this or that, the unending craving to achieve this or that goal, or even the desire to continue with the life that has come to be (*bhūta*) in the context of change and uncertainty is distress and discomfort. The 'influx of views' (*diṭṭhasava*) represent the distress and discomfort one experiences when one has to abandon a cherished view in the face of overwhelming evidence against it. Why should ignorance be the cause of distress and discomfort? Human beings thirst for knowledge about the nature of things in the world because of a sense of insecurity and uncertainty they experience in life. In this search for security and certainty, one often forgets what is relevant and irrelevant. One aspect of life that has suffered most as a result of this is the moral. For the Buddha, who considered truth and morality as being closely related, the enormous involvement in speculative metaphysics is ignorance, not knowledge. The genuine knowledge is knowledge of things 'as they have come to be' (*yathabhūta*),[11] and implies taking the seen as the 'mere seen' (*diṭṭha-matta*), the heard as the 'mere heard' (*suta-matta*), the reflected at the 'mere reflected' (*muta-matta*) , the cognized as the 'mere cognized' (*viññāta-matta*),[12] without going in search of mysterious substances or intrinsic qualities and secondary qualities,[13] something that prominent philosophers of the Western world are now beginning to realize.[14] As mentioned earlier, this is reflected in the more recent attempts to recognize the objectivity of content rather than the objectivity of truth (see Chapter 11). The ignorance of the four noble truths, which combine truth with morals, is thus the 'influx of ignorance' that generates distress and discomfort.

If the influxes are to be understood in this manner, it is possible to maintain that 'wisdom' (*paññā*) is a refinement of

one's knowledge to the extent that one becomes free from **attraction** toward pleasures of sense, further becoming, views and ignorance. As such, that refinement also should lead to the elimination of **revulsion** as well. Revulsion to pleasures of sense could turn out to be absolute self-denial. Revulsion to further becoming can promote self-immolation. Revulsion to views can mean not adopting any view. The Buddha seems to make a clear difference between grasping onto a view and adopting or utilizing a view. Finally, revulsion to ignorance may lead to an insatiable search for unlimited knowledge. 'Wisdom', for the Buddha, was therefore a refinement of knowledge that enables one to adopt a middle path between extremes of any sort. It was mentioned in Chapter 13 that an understanding of the four noble truths was a requisite for the cultivation of the path. In the present case, it is not a simple understanding but the ultimate realization or penetration into the four noble truths and reaching the culmination of the noble eightfold path.[15] The boundaries that were set up to facilitate the practice of the eightfold path or any other method of practice leading up to enlightenment and freedom are thus eliminated. Hence the reference to 'spewing out influxes' through wisdom as the non-circumscribed (*nippariyāya*).[16]

A person freed from the four influxes is said to know that he/she is freed, that birth has been extinguished, that the moral life has been perfected, that what was to be done has been done, that there is no further becoming such as the present.[17]

Freedom is also often defined as the extinguishing of lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*) and confusion (*moha*).[18] Wisdom, discussed above, is the result of the elimination of confusion. The total elimination of lust and hatred that accompanies it is often compared to the extinguishing of a fire (*aggi*).[19] The freed one (*nibbuta*) is therefore called one who is 'cooled' (*sītibhūta*),[20] a peaceful one (*santa*),[21] who is appeased (*upasanta*),[22] and one who is of stable character (*thitatta*).[23] The cleansing of character involved in the attainment of

enlightenment and freedom is expressed by phrases like 'one who is bathed' (*sinātā*[24] or *nahātaka*[25]). These are only a few of the epithets applied to the freed person that expresses the perfection of character.

The behaviour of the person endowed with such a character is then illustrated by the simile of the lotus (*puṇḍarīka*) as someone who remains unsmeared by the world.[26] Such a person has no need to conflict with the world, even if the world were to conflict with him or her.[27] The things that cause fear and trepidation in the minds of the unenlightened, namely, loss (*alābha*), disrepute (*ayasa*), blame (*nindā*) or pain (*dukkha*) do not cause any fright in the freed one. Even the greatest fear experienced by human beings, namely, the fear of death, does not produce any fear in the enlightened one.[28] He or she has no fear from any quarter (*akutobhaya*).[29]

CHAPTER 15

# LANGUAGE AFTER FREEDOM

> "What we cannot speak about, we must pass over in silence."

So said Ludwig Wittgenstein.[1] It served as the ultimate statement regarding the nature of the philosophical enterprise for a few decades after it was stated. Some who had the privilege of sitting in Wittgenstein's classes-- one of them turned out to be a leading Buddhist epistemologist in the modern world[2] -- and those who followed them tended to argue that the ultimate exists but is unspeakable.

Linguistic transcendence of ultimate reality became the most popular creed among the Buddhist scholars, so much so that there is no end to the interpretations of the fourfold negations in the early discourses. Matters were complicated by the existence of an enigmatic statement, comparable to that of Wittgenstein.

> A person who has attained the goal is without measure; that by which he could be spoken of, that does not exist for him. When all phenomena are destroyed, all modes of description are likewise destroyed.[3]

The ultimate goal is explained in the Buddhist texts as being twofold. First is the attainment of moral perfection. Second is final death. Both represent 'states of freedom' *(nibbāna-dhātu)*[4]. The former represents the freedom achieved in the present life *(diṭṭhadhammika)* when the psychophysical personality, cooled *(sītibhūta)* through the elimination of the internal fires of passion, hatred and confusion, continues to function. The latter is the freedom attained with the destruction of that personality when becomings (*bhavāni*) cease altogether. Elsewhere, the freed person is described as one who does not come into a 'state of being' *(samāna)*.[5]

The fact that a person who has attained enlightenment and freedom is not reborn is clearly admitted in the discourses. Cunda, a novice in the ascetic movement once reported that, according to the views of some of the wandering mendicants, the Buddha claimed knowledge and insight without horizon *(atīrakaṁ)* relating to the past *(atīta)*, but not in regard to the future *(anāgata)*. The Buddha criticized such secondhand reports about someone's knowledge and insight. He claimed that with regard to the past his awareness follows in the wake of memory *(satānusārī-viññāṇaṁ)*. With regard to the future, his knowledge was 'born of enlightenment' *(bodhijaṁ)*, and that knowledge was: "This is the last birth; now there is no more further becoming."[6] For him, this was one bit of knowledge he could claim with certainty, and that is because it was about his own freedom. Furthermore, it was a statement pertaining to a freed one at death, that is, a statement relating to a life-process that was, from the time of enlightenment until death, was 'dependently arisen' *(paṭiccasamuppanna)*, not dispositionally conditioned *(asaṅkhata)*[7].

Yet he left four propositions pertaining to a freed one's status after death *(param maraṇā)* unexplained.

They are:

1. The perfected one exists after death. (This alone is true; any other is false.)
2. The perfect on does not exist after death. (This alone is true; any other is false.)
3. It is both that the perfected one exists and does not exist after death. (This alone is true; any other is false.)
4. It is both that the perfect one neither exists nor does not exist after death. (This alone is true;any other is false.)[8]

The question that has tormented many is, Why did the Buddha leave these four propositions unexplained or did not

answer questions relating to them either in the positive or in the negative, for at least the second proposition comes close to what he asserted with regard to the perfected one who has reached the end of the journey?

In the first place, all four propositions are metaphysical. They can be considered metaphysical only in the context of the Buddha's definition of truth. The propositions were made, or questions regarding them were raised, always by the metaphysicians of the pre-Buddhist traditions or by some of the unenlightened disciples of the Buddha. From the preceding discussions, it is evident that the Buddha's definition of truth did not involve the existence *(atthitā)*/non-existence *(n'atthitā)* dichotomy. Existence, he found, was not simple empirical existence but permanent existence *(sassata)*. Non-existence was not simple coming into being and passing away depending upon conditions but straightforward annihilation *(uccheda)*. The combination of existence and non-existence retained the implications of both. Negations of both implied total skepticism, that is, denial of both experience and description (Chapter 12).

We have seen that the Buddha was operating within a framework where the conception of truth was totally different. Truth is not what 'exists' but one that has 'become' *(bhuta)*. The non-metaphysical explanation of 'become' would be in terms of conditions *(paccaya)* that lead to such 'becoming.' Thus, the principle of dependent arising that is based upon the experience of the dependently arisen phenomena has to allow room for situations where the presence of conditions allows for the arising of the effect: "When that, then this" *(imasmiṁ sati idaṁ hoti)*, and the absence of conditions implies the non-arising of the effect, stated in the form: "When not that, then not this" *(imasmiṁ asati idaṁ na hoti)*. The first of the four propositions, namely, the perfected one exists after death, is rejected by this principle. To say that such a person exists and yet he cannot be spoken of is to make a sharp distinction

between experience and description. The evidence provided in Chapter 4 relating to experience and language should rule out this possibility. Furthermore, the statement quoted earlier that "when all phenomena are destroyed all modes of expression are likewise destroyed" does not permit the retention of some phenomena while all modes of description are destroyed. In other words, 'dependent arising' does not accommodate independent and linguistically transcendent entities.

The simile of the 'fire' *(aggi)* that has been extinguished due to the exhaustion of the fuel, one of two similes used by the Buddha to explain his reluctance to assert or deny any one of the four propositions, highlights the epistemological and ontological reasons that render these propositions metaphysical.[9] However, the statement in the same context that the perfected one who is designated in terms of form, feeling, perception, disposition and consciousness (that is, the psychophysical personality) and who is freed from them (that is, not attached to them) is deep, immeasurable and unfathomable, like the great ocean"[10] has led to much confusion. It is this statement that compelled Jayatilleke to conclude his dissertation with the comment:

> It was not that there was something that the Buddha did not know, but what he 'knew' in the transcendent sense could not be conveyed in words because of the limitations of language and empiricism.[11]

This probably was the result of his sitting at the feet of Wittgenstein. In addition to the influence of Wittgenstein, Jayatilleke was also holding on to the popular belief that the Buddha was omniscient in an absolute sense. Such an interpretation would not be compatible with the Buddha's "Discourse on Everything" *(Sabba-sutta)* (see Chapter 9), which, to his great embarrassment, was missed by Jayatilleke.[12] In light of the evidence against recognizing the existence of the perfected one after death or the inability of any linguistic medium to express his status, it is necessary that an alternative

explanation of the characterization of that person as "deep, immeasurable, unfathomable, like the great ocean" be sought.

The promise of a transcendent state for the person who has reached the ultimate goal is an extremely **pleasant** *(piya, manāpa)* one, especially for the Brahmanical thinker and the ordinary unenlightened person. In fact, these questions were often raised by them. It was never a problem for the enlightened disciples of the Buddha whose attitude toward life and death is clearly expressed by Sāriputta.

> Not fain am I to die nor yet to live.
> I shall lay down this mortal frame anon
> With mind alert, with consciousness controlled.
> With thought of death I dally not, nor yet
> Delight in living. I wait the hour
> Like a hireling who hath done his task.[13]

On the contrary, the statement that the perfected one does not exist after death would be extremely **unpleasant** *(appiya, amanāpa)* to the Brahmanical metaphysician as well as the ordinary unenlightened person, which again is not a criterion for determining truth. If that were the case, why did the Buddha refrain from asserting the second proposition which is similar to the view he held regarding the perfected one at the moment of death? The reason for this is that he felt his explanation of the non-survival of the perfected one would be taken as annihilation. Annihilation *(uccheda)* is the corollary of permanence *(sassata)*. Becoming *(bhava)* is the corollary of non-becoming in the future *(apunabbhava)*. *It is this latter corollary* that is implied in the principle of dependent arising, not the former. These are the epistemological and ontological reasons for his considering the four propositions metaphysical.

There is yet another more important reason for perceiving the four propositions to be metaphysical. The Buddha was reluctant to speak of even empirical truths *(bhuta, taccha)* if

they were of no practical value *(anatthasaṁhita)*[14]. The four propositions pertain to the future, hence a little weaker than the empirical truths (see Chapter 10). The adoption of the pragmatic rule was more important in respect to propositions about the future. He was very specific in maintaining that he would not make a statement about the future *(anāgata)*, even if it were to be true, unless it is also fruitful.[15] The second simile the Buddha used in order to demonstrate the non-fruitfulness *(anatthsaṁhita)* of the four propositions is a person wounded by an arrow.[16] It is as if a person shot by an arrow would not allow that arrow to be removed from his/her body until the person receives answers to a whole series of questions such as, Who shot the arrow? What caste does he/she belong to? What is his/her name or clan? What is his/her physical stature? Or, from which part of the country does he/her come? According to the Buddha, that person would bleed to death by the time the inquiry is completed. The Buddha's recommendation is that human beings should give priority to solving the immediate problem of suffering *(dukkha)* leaving aside metaphysical issues, which in any case are not empirically resolved.

In addition to the four propositions regarding the status of the perfected one after death, the Buddha enumerates a whole mass of theories relating to the nature of the self and the world all couched in the substantialist language and for which no empirical answers can be given without falling into one metaphysical position or another.[17]

Yet another way to look at freedom is to place it in the context of the universe. In two projects completed recently, one on early Buddhist ethics and the other a translation and annotation of Nāgārjuna's *Suhṛdlekhā*, I have tried to explain that unlike many other ethical traditions in India, the Buddha and Nāgārjuna focused their attention on human life. Human life is considered to be a good bourne *(sugati)* even for the so-called divine beings, the denizens of the various heavens.

Leaving the concepts of heaven and hell out for the time being, it is possible to say that among all the forms of life one can observe in this planet of ours, human beings are in a rather unique situation endowed with intelligence and capacities. Birth as a human being is therefore a rare opportunity compared to the life of animals who inhabit this earth. Yet, when we place that human life in the context of the universe, what it can achieve by way of both material and moral progress may be rather limited. Realizing this, the Buddha maintained that in spite of the arising or non-arising of the *buddhas*, this status of things, this process of dependence, this conditionality has remained.[18] In other words, the universe is open ended whether there happened to be enlightened ones or not. Even for the person who has attained enlightenment and freedom, the universe, as he/she experiences it, is open-ended. The Buddha himself had to be prepared for unpredicted events or situations. All that a person can do is to deal with that universe as it has come to be *(yathābhūtaṁ)*. What is within one's capacity is to restrain one's response to it. This is precisely what the Buddha meant by freedom. The attainment of enlightenment and freedom by one person may mean that **the universe is closed for him/her** at the moment of death, for there is no more further becoming. But it is **not closed for everyone else.** The open-ended universe has survived in spite of the Buddha and thousands and thousands of his disciples who attained freedom and enlightenment through the ages. For those who are struggling with greed, hatred and confusion, it is not yet closed.

CHAPTER 16

# PRIVATE AND PUBLIC LANGUAGES

It has been noted that the Buddha recognized an internal mechanism in order to account for the dependence of the physical language on the speaker (see Chapter 4). Thus, in addition to the physical organ of speech and the physical language or verbal **behavior** *(vacī-kamma)*, he admitted 'verbal dispositions' (*vacī-sankhara*).

This would lead us to a controversy that raged for sometime in Western philosophy as to whether there could be a 'private language.' As mentioned earlier (Chapter 4), a **behaviorist** philosopher of language like Quine would like to see language as a purely public phenomenon. There may be several reasons for looking upon language in this manner. In the first place, there is a fear that the recognition of a private language would make it difficult to place language within the true/false mould. This would be a genuine fear only in a context in which one is committed to such a dichotomy and where public verification is used as the only criterion for deciding what is true or false. Secondly, it is feared that the assertion of a private language could lead to solipsism. This is illustrated by the so-called 'protocol language' proposed by Rudolf Carnap which, according to the "usual view and terminology" (rejected by the author), could not be intersubjective but only intrasubjective.[1] But Carnap maintained that people can understand one another's protocol statements, and if the statements in the physical language are taken to be intersubjective, he assumed that the 'protocol language' would be part of the physical language. Thirdly, it is assumed that if there were to be a private language, there must be an internal reader, a comprehender or a user of that language. This has to be an agent distinct from the stuff that is read or comprehended. Finally, it could open up the pandora's box (for the traditional

philosopher) of having to deal with phenomena like telepathy. This latter, when pursued to its extreme, could also provide a foundation for some of the beliefs such as the possibility of transmitting ideas without physical verbal communication, a belief that has come to be rampant among some of the Buddhists.

One of the earliest and most comprehensive defences of a private language is by Ayer.[2] His major contribution to this long-drawn controversy is when he raised a more fundamental question as to the meanings of the terms 'private' and 'public.' This contribution has generally been ignored by modern Western philosophers who found his conception of 'private' not to be so private and conception of 'public' not so public. Ayer may have been inspired by James' desolidification of concepts. But he provided a strong logical and philosophical justification of it. By this time, Ayer had abandoned his former creed -- logical positivism -- and begun to appreciate a pragmatic conception of truth.[3] Hence, he was not defending the absolute true/false dichotomy as he did in his first publication. Furthermore, Ayer also softened his views on verifiability without abandoning it altogether.[4] Interestingly, Ayer is not defending a 'private language' on the stipulations made by Carnap regarding the 'protocol language.' Taking the imagined Robinson Crusoe as an example and placing him in his island while still an infant, having not yet learnt to speak,[5] Ayer argues in favour of the possibility of a private language. James had already made a strong criticism of the view that experiences such as pain, hunger, thirst or love require a spectator who remains outside these sensations and observes them. To say "I have a pain" is equivalent to saying "I know that I have a pain." Knowledge thus turns out to be that of the subject while pain constitutes the object. Here we have what James called the "psychologist's fallacy,"[6] an idea that James believed received philosophical justification in the hands of Immanuel Kant in modern philosophy.[7] Kant's transcendental unity of apperception is no more than a sophisticated version of

the Upaniṣadic conception of self *(ātman)*.[8] Ayer was not unaware of James' criticism of this view and argues pursuasively that talk about internal sensations does not disappear with the disappearance of such a spectator.[9] Finally, it may appear rather strange for some one who at some point of time was a hard-nosed positivist to be open-minded about a phenomenon such as telepathy,[10] without committing himself to its extreme version that one can communicate with a private language.

None of the conditions that threaten a behaviourist linguist from recognizing a private language exists in the context of Buddhism. Defusing or deconstructing solidified concepts, recognizing their flexibility and emphasizing a 'language of becoming' that matches the flow of experience, the Buddha did not have to commit himself to an absolute true/false dichotomy. Similarly, he emphasized verification[11] without confining it to purely physical but including the psychological and moral phenomena as well. The theory of non-substantiality (*anatta*) eliminated the need for an 'onlooker' and the conception of 'dependent arising' *(paṭiccasamuppāda)* explained the empirical self. The possibility of developing telephathy *(cetopariyañāna)* was recognized, but it is only a one-way street, the telepathic person being able to read the thoughts and, therefore, the language of another. There was no admission that two people can **communicate** through telepathy, that is, without public language. Therefore, if the Buddha's conceptions of 'verbal disposition' and 'verbal behaviour' are to be understood as representing two languages, they need to be evaluated in a way different from the manner in which a modern linguist will assess 'private' and 'public' languages.

It seems that for the Buddha they are not two different languages occurring at two levels, higher and lower, but a language operating at two different locations, internal and external. If the criterion that a modern linguist adopts in devaluing or even rejecting an internal language is that it is not

amenable to clear formulation, the Buddha would look upon it as a false criterion. It is no reason to say that there cannot be any such language. Even the public language when it is first presented is not clear and precise. It is like the first draft of a paper or a book. The Buddha was willing to admit this. He would even go further and maintain that not only is there a lack of clarity and precision in a private language, it is even more influenced by the hyperactive mind. However, that applies even to the public language. Imagine the variety of conflicting theories in almost every field, philosophy and religion being pre-eminent in this connection, that human beings have authoured. This again is no argument to support the anti-relativist thesis that there must be one ultimate explanation of human experience and thought.

All this led the Buddha toward accepting the importance of 'verbal dispositions' even in determining 'verbal action or behaviour'. Hence his oft-quoted statement, "Having thought, one performs deeds through body, speech and mind."[12] Just as much as there is a need to clean up the public language, without going to the extreme of constructing an ideal one, even so there is a necessity to cleanse the private language. The purpose of the 'establishment of mindfulness' *(satipaṭṭhāna)*, considered to be a royal road to enlightenment and freedom,[13] is precisely this cleansing of the private language without allowing it to run riot. Cleansing does not mean totally eliminating 'verbal disposition' or, for that matter any disposition *(saṅkhāra)*, for that is tantamount to suicide.

For the Buddha, the activities taking place at both locations, internal and external, private or public, have the same character. They consist in 'putting things together and speaking' (which is the literal meaning of the term for conception, namely, *saṅkhā*). That putting together depends upon our capacities and interests combined with whatever sensory inputs we have. Such 'speaking' when taking place internally constitutes 'verbal dispositions' (again the literal

meaning of the term *saṅkhāra* is 'putting together'). This would justify Ayer's example of Robinson Crusoe speaking to himself. 'Putting together and speaking' is also part of the physical language, hence the Buddha's characterization of language as convention or agreement *(sammuti)* (see Chapter 6). Agreement even at this level depends upon our capacities and interests in addition to our experiences. Thus, the activities at both locations are similar indeed.

There is one more issue that needs to be addressed which is what generates a **behaviourist** thesis in linguistics. This is that aspect of language which expresses universals or, to put it in a more restrained way, regularity. Some philosophers who wanted to account for this aspect of language have relied upon pre-fabricated or pre-determined structures, conceptual or linguistic, located in the human mind which activate conceptual or linguistic **behaviour**. Impermanence *(anicca)* and non-substantiality *(anatta)* being two legs of the tripod, the third being unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), on which his entire doctrine rested, the Buddha was not willing to admit such pre-fabricated structures over which human beings have no control. Universals (not incorruptible) that become part of the language, which made the Buddha refer to language as *sāmañña* (see Chapter 6), are not more than experienced relations among events and which are no more permanent and incorruptible than the events themselves.

To conclude this chapter, we quote a metaphor of Ayer, even though he considers it to be an imperfect analogy.[14] Physical language, according to this metaphor, is like a photograph. **Behaviourist** linguists have confined their speculation to the photograph only, ignoring the mechanism of the camera. Neither the mechanism of the camera nor the object presented to it as it appears in the photograph is fixed or pre-determined. Depending upon the sophistication of the camera, there is a wide range of photographs it can produce. The imperfection of the analogy is that the mechanism of the camera is still rather

limited compared to the mechanism of the perceiving mind which is involved in experiencing and conceiving, this conceiving, as mentioned above, being a form of expressing.

While the capacity to develop one's own language, as in the case of Robinson Crusoe, is not an impossibility, human beings normally do not experience a situation in which Crusoe is placed. A person generally learns his or her first language by ostension from the mother or anyone else who brings him or her up. As such a human being rarely escapes the imposition of the language of the community on its 'verbal disposition.' This is no reason to consider language to be a purely social phenomenon. Just as much as in ontology, the talk about 'objects' is being gradually replaced by discussions of 'objective pull,' even so now is the time for linguistic philosophers to abandon the idea that language is a purely social phenomenon and start talking about a 'social pull" That 'social pull' is clearly portrayed in Edgar Rice Burroughs' enlightening and imaginative story of Tarzan, the Ape-man, who was left in the jungle before he could be aware of anything. It is like Ayer's example of the baby Robinson Crusoe, with the difference that Tarzan was brought up by a she-ape. He first learned the language of the apes and, along with it, their culture without which he could not have survived. Subsequently, his 'verbal dispositions' enabled him to learn the language of humans, even though he was unable to teach it to the apes or to use it in communicating with them.

# CONCLUSION

In the light of evidence presented above, is it possible to speak of a linguistic theory in the Buddha's teachings? An analytic answer to such a question needs to take into account three important purposes of the Buddha's discourse on language. The **first** was the deflation of the linguistic theory that was emerging during his day and which was intended to justify the substantialist metaphysics of the Brahmanical tradition. The **second** was the necessity of formulating a conception of language that is in conformity with his own perception of what reality is. The **third**, and the more important, was the need to achieve peace among human beings who spoke different languages, that is, to discover a means of inter-social communication. This may be asking too much of a theory, for a theory is normally supposed to describe or explain 'things as they are.' However, that was not what the Buddha meant by a theory. Now, the **first** is a criticism of a theory; the **third** is what one wants to achieve with a theory, and the **second** constitutes **a theory** with which one can achieve that goal.

The first of these three purposes, namely, a critique of a particular theory, which the Buddha considered to be inimical to social harmony, is what was explained in Chapter 1. The remaining chapters are intended to explain what may be called the Buddha's theory of language. That theory is based upon the Buddha's view that, as a human phenomenon, language is dispositionally conditioned (*saṅkhata*) and, like all dispositionally conditioned things, language is also dependently arisen (*paṭiccasamuppanna*). As such, one cannot expect a reductive theory of language from the Buddha which guarantees the precise conditions that generate language and which continue to determine its change. As has been emphasized earlier, language is non-substantial (*anatta*) and empty of substance (*suñña*) as any other phenomenon. In the sphere of linguistics, non-substantiality or emptiness implies the absence of permanent and eternal structures. The Buddha saw no reason to arrest the flux of language and fix it

in such a way that it could remain the same for all and for ever. This leads us to the third purpose mentioned above, namely, the adoption of an attitude toward language that leads to peace among human beings. Let us examine this attitude in some detail.

The various characteristics of language discussed in Chapter 4 may be brought under the two broader aspects mentioned in Chapter 16. Language has both private and public involvement. As long as it is associated with human experience and its expression, the experience being that of an individual, language reflects a private or subjective determination. No two books written by two people are identical in terms of either content or expression. It is a recognition of this fact that is reflected in the laws intended to prevent plagiarism and preserve copy-rights. If language were to be a purely objective phenomenon such laws would be meaningless, for no one would be copying anybody else. Each one will be compelled by the laws of language to say what has to be said and write what has to be written. An individual could not be guilty of plagiarism and no one can claim a copy-right in this respect. It is only by separating language from human conception that one can even attempt to analyse it as an objective phenomenon, and this is not a possibility. What makes the **behaviourist** philosopher reluctant to admit a 'social pull' in language instead of making it a purely social phenomenon? The reason seems to be rather clear. Experience and reason have failed to give us ultimate objectivity. Language is the only phenomenon to which they can hang on to in their search for ultimate objectivity. *Logos* or *Brahman* was the primodial, not one of human creation.

However, the 'social pull' in language is generated as a result of its expressive function, mentioned above, being dominated by the communicative function. It is this communicative function that restrains solipsistic developments in linguistic behaviour and brings the individual to be in harmony with the community. Yet that communicative function calls for great sacrifice on the part of the individual. In fact, a child learning to communicate with its

parents is left at their mercy. How often does a child get penalized for not learning the means of communication considered proper by the parents? The child is totally dependent upon the parents.

The communicative function of language, while suppressing extreme individualism, has the wholesome effect of bringing some uniformity and harmony within the community or the society. Both the individual and the society stand to benefit by such harmony, even though the individual makes a bigger sacrifice. Yet, where a plurality of societies has emerged, is harmony to be achieved by a 'social pull' where the stronger society sublates and overpowers a weaker one? At this level, what is the criterion that can be used to determine which society is stronger and which is weaker? At various times in the history of humanity, brute force was considered to be a strength. The reason why English and Spanish have become the most widely used languages in the world is because British and Spanish colonial powers adopted the attitude that the colonized should learn the language of the colonizer, if the former were to communicate with the latter. It is not different from what happened to the helpless child who had to accept the decisions of the parents. Strength and weakness thus came to be determined on the basis of brute force, not moral or cultural standing. The Buddha's advice to the Vajjians, when they were threatened with aggression by King Ajātasattu, highlights the importance of moral and cultural strength as a deterrence against aggression.

As if asserting that no human society which has evolved for centuries in isolation caused by geographical or other conditions should be treated as a new-born baby, the Buddha argued that language is a means of communication (*vohāra*), not something on the basis of which one can claim superiority over others. Respecting another's language is not achieved by imposing one's own language upon a group speaking a different language but through a mutual understanding of each other's languages. Conflicts are generated when each one claims one's own convention, whether it be political, social, moral or linguistic, to

be the embodiment of 'truth' (*sakaṁ sakaṁ sammutiṁ āhu saccaṁ*), instead of considering it to be a useful means to a goal. This is the message conveyed by the Buddha's "Discourse on the Analysis of Non-conflict" (*Araṇavibhaṅga-sutta*).

The Buddha's analysis of language may not yield a definitive theory. A theory being something that human beings themselves formulate, the Buddha was primarily concerned with the manner in which any such theory could contribute to the welfare and happiness of human beings. The welfare and happiness of human beings need not be sacrificed for the sake of a theory. "The human being is not made for a language; language is made for the human being."

## NOTES

### PREFACE

1. Kalupahana, David J. *A History of Buddhist Philosophy. Continuities and Discontinuities*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992, p.xiv.
2. *Causality. The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1975, pp. 54-66.

### CHAPTER 1

1. F. Max Muller, tr. *Vedic Hymns, The Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 32, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1891, p. xxxi.
2. See Walter H. Maurer's excellent translation and annotation, *Pinnacles of India's Past, Selections from the Ṛgveda*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1986.
3. ibid., p. 5.
4. *Ṛgveda* x.97.
5. ibid., x.146.
6. *S* 4.302-304.
7. *Ṛgveda* x.125, tr. by Maurer, p. 281.
8. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 8.3.3-5; tr. by Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1953, p.496.
9. *Ṛgveda* x.90.
10. *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* ii.2.7.1.
11. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* xi.2.3.1-6
12. p. 456.
13. 7.1-26.
14. *Sūyagaḍam* (*Sūtrakṛtāṅga*, with commentary (*vivaraṇ a*) o Silāṅnka, ed. A.S. Suri and C. Ganindra, 2 vols., Bhavanagara, Bombay: Vijayadevasura, 1950-1953), 1.14.22.

15. *M* 2.197.

16. *Sūyagaḍam* 1.14.19.

17. K. N. Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1963, p.163.

18. ibid.

19. *HBP* p. 15-20.

20. ibid., p.130.

## CHAPTER 2

1. *M* 1.160-175.

2. ibid. 1.167.

3. See my *HBP* pp. 42-43.

4. *M* 1.77 ff.

5. *Sn* 781, *Sakaṁ hi diṭṭhiṁ katham accayeyya,*
   *chandānunīto ruciyā niviṭṭho*
   *sayaṁ samattāni pakubbamāno*
   *yathā hi jāneyya tātha vadeyya.*

6. *M* 1.167

7. ibid.

8. *A* 1.58-59; 2.147-148; 3.178-179. Also *D* 3.127.

9. *S* 3.71-73.

## CHAPTER 3

1. William James, *Some Problems of Philosophy*, ed. F. Burkhardt, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979, p.32.

2. *S* 4.138.

3. Quine, *Pursuit of Truth*, p.2.

4. ibid., p.3.

5. ibid.

6. ibid., p.5.

7. *S* 2.178; 3.149, 151; 5.226, 441.

8. *D* 3.80-98.

9. *S* 2.17.

10. *D* 3.85.

11. ibid., 3.86.

12. ibid.

13. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 1.4.7.

14. *M* 1.53.

15. *D* 2.62.

## CHAPTER 4

1. *S* 5.218.

2. See *HBP* pp. 32-33.

3. *S* 2.1 ff. as in the statement *saṅkhārapaccayā viññāṇaṁ*.

4. ibid., 2.4, 39-40; 4.293.

5. *M* 1.389-390; A 1.122; 2.231.

6. *A* 2.79.

7. See William James, *The Will to Believe*, ed. F. Burkhardt, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979, p.59.

8. *M* 1.292-293.

9. ibid., 1.292.

10. ibid., 1.293.

## CHAPTER 5

1. *M* 1.301; *S* 4.293.

2. David j. Kalupahana, *The Principles of Buddhist Psychology*, Albany: The State University of New York, 1987, p.64.

3. *M* 1.164-165.

4. ibid., 165-166.

5. ibid., 1.175.

6. *D* 3.230.

7. *M* 1.296.

8. William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, ed. F. Burkhardt, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983, p.232.

9. Quine, *Pursuit of Truth*, p.61.

10. *M* 1.301; *S* 4.395.

11. Quine, *Pursuit of Truth*, p.64.

12. ibid.

## CHAPTER 6

1. Quine, *Pursuit of Truth*, pp. 37-38.

2. *S* 3.71-73.

3. *D* 1.202.

4. *M* 3.234.

5. *Sn* 897.

6. *Quiddities*, pp. 24-25.

7. *M* 3.234.

8. ibid.

9. ibid.

10. *D* 1.202.

11. *Pursuit of Truth*, pp. 37-38.

12. ibid., p.94.

13. ibid., p.55.

14. *Sn* 897.

## CHAPTER 7

1. *The Principles of Psychology*, pp. 573-574.
2. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 4.4.15.
3. *Kaṭha* 4.5, 12, 13.
4. *Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā* 4, 16, 23; *Petavatthu-aṭṭhakathā* 55.
5. *D* 1.200.
6. ibid., 1.201.
7. ibid., 1.202.
8. ibid., 1.110.
9. *M* 1.35, 62-63.
10. *A* 1.249.
11. *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1974, p.23, col.3.
12. *D* 3.216.
13. *A* 2.1, 10; *Sn* 740.
14. *Dh* 207.
15. *It* 53-54.

## CHAPTER 8

1. *Pursuit of Truth*, p.7.
2. ibid., p.38.
3. *S* 2.36.
4. *M* 1.395-396.
5. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 1.4 1.
6. *D* 1.17 ff.
7. *S* 2.17.
8. *Sn* 781.
9. *S* 2.17; see also *HBP* pp.58-59.

## CHAPTER 9

1. *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, selected and edited by Justus Buchler, New York: Dover, 1955, p. 48.
2. Richard Feynman, *The Character of Physical Law*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press, 1990, sixteenth reprint, p.172.
3. *S* 1.11.
4. *Pursuit of Truth*, p.10.
5. *M* 1.262-264; *S* 2.17, 20, 23.
6. *Pratītyasamutpāda-sūtra*, in *Epigraphia Indica*, Delhi: Government of India, 1931, vol. 21, p.197.
7. *S* 2.25.
8. ibid., 2.26.
9. ibid., 4.15.
10. ibid., 4.28.
11. See *HBP* p.201.

## CHAPTER 10

1. *HBP* pp.210-214.
2. *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, pp.296-297.
3. *D* 1.17 ff.
4. *M* 2.197.
5. *D* 2.229; A 1.197; 2.46.
6. *M* 1.258.
7. ibid., 1.27-28.
8. p. 311.
9. *D* 3.155.
10. *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, p.312.
11. *Vbh* 294.
12. p.397.
13. See Quine, *Pursuit of Truth*, pp.56-59.

## CHAPTER 11

1. See *HBP* pp. 3-21.
2. *S* 2.26.
3. *M* 1.395.
4. *D* 3.5, 227.
5. *S* 4.21; *A* 2.72; *Dh* 4, 174.
6. *S* 1.27; *A* 1.116; *Dh* 273; *It* 108, 115.
7. *D* 3.5, 227.
8. *S* 3.143
9. *M* 1.395.
10. James, *Some Problems of Philosophy*, pp.33,39.
11. *D* 1.28; *S* 2.22-23.
12. See *Compendium of Philosophy* (translation of *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*), by Shwe Zan Aung, revised by Mrs. Rhys Davids, London: PTS, 1963 (reprint), pp.6,38.
13. *D* 2.137, 155.
14. ibid., 1.5. 64; M 1.180, 268, 288, 345; 3.34; *A* 2.22, 209; 5.205, 267, 296.
15. *M* 1.395.
16. *Some Problems of Philosophy*, pp. 44-47.
17. See Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, p.361.
18. ibid., pp. 362-364. Jayatilleke himself does not favour this attribution.
19. *A* 1.60.
20. *Aṅguttara-nikāyaṭṭhakathā*, 2.118.
21. See Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, p.361.
22. Tilakaratne, Asanga, *Nirvana and Ineffability. A study of the Buddhist theory of reality and language*, Kelaniya (Sri Lanka): Post-graduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Kelaniya, 1993, pp.135-140.
23. See *HBP*, pp. 121-131.

## CHAPTER 12

1. *A* 2.25.
2. *D* 1.55.
3. *A* 2.52.
4. Quine, *Pursuit of Truth*, p. 92.
5. *M* 2.170-171.
6. ibid., 1.167.
7. Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, pp.45ff.
8. *The Middle Length Sayings*, London: Pali Text Society, 1967, 1.124.
9. *M* 1.97.
10. *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, pp. 174-179.
11. *S* 3.36-37. Yaṁ kho... *anuseti, taṁ anumiyati, yaṁ anumiyati, tena saṅkhaṁ gacchati.*
12. ibid., 1.11.
13. ibid., 2.58.
14. ibid.
15. ibid.
16. *M* 1.169.

## CHAPTER 13

1. *Sn* 916.
2. *S* 2.25; 3.3-4.
3. *M* 1.415-417.
4. *S* 2.25; *M* 1.167, 324, 325.
5. *Thag* 304.
6. *M* 1.324.
7. *D* 2.119-120.
8. *S* 2.17.

9. *D* 3.5, 227.

10. *A* 449-451.

11. *S* 5.357.

12. *M* 3.4-5.

13. ibid., 2.27.

## CHAPTER 14

1. R.E. Hume, ***The Thirteen Principal Upaniṣhads***, London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1971, p.569.

2. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 1.4.10.

3. *Chāndogya* 6.8.6; 6.9.4; 6.10.3, etc.

4. *D* 3.84; *M* 1.111; 3.195, 224; *S* 4.94;*A* 5.226, 256 ff.

5. *M* 1.167.

6. See, *The Principles of Buddhist Psychology*, p.28.

7. *M* 1.362; *A* 3.388; 4.161, 165.

8. *D* 2.81, 91, 94, 98, 123, 126.

9. ibid., 3.216; *M* 1.55; *S* 5.56, 189; *A* 3.414.

10. *M* 1.130 ff.

11. *S* 2.17.

12. *Ud* 8.

13. *D* 1.70.

14. Hilary Putnam, *The Many Faces of Realism*, LaSalle, Illionois: Open Court, 1989, p. 8 ff.

15. *S* 5.422-423.

16. *A* 4.451.

17. *M* 1.38; *S* 2.124; 4.86, etc.

18. *S* 4.251; *Ud* 85, etc.

19. *M* 1.487; *Sn* 19, 235.

20. *A* 1.138; 2.208; 5.65.

21. *D* 1.12; *S* 1.5; *A* 22.18; *Sn* 746.

22. *M* 1.125; *S* 1.83, 162; *A* 3.394; *Sn* 848, 919, 1087, 1099.

23. *Sn* 359, 370.

24. *M* 1.39; *S* 1.169, 183.

25. *Dh* 422; *Sn* 521, 646.

26. *A* 2.37-39.

27. *S* 3.138.

28. *Thag* 1002-1003.

29. *S* 1.192; *Thag* 510; *Thig* 333; *Sn* 561.

## CHAPTER 15

1. *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*, tr. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961, #7.

2. K.N. Jayatilleke attended Wittgenstein's classes during the time he studied at Christ's College, Cambridge, reading for the Tripos in Moral Science, 1945-1948.

3. *Sn* 1076. *Atthaṅgatassa na pamāṇam atthi,*
*yena naṁ vajju, taṁ tassa n' atthi.*
*sabbesu dhammesu samūhatesu,*
*samūhatā vādapathā pi sabbe.*

4. *It* 38-39.

5. ibid., 58, *atthaṅgato na samānam eti.*

6. *D* 3.134.

7. See *HBP* pp. 92-93.

8. ibid., 1.136; *M* 1.426; 484.

9. *M* 1.487.

10. ibid.

11. *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, p. 476.

12. See my article, "A Buddhist tract on empiricism," in *Philosophy East and West*, Honolulu, 19 (1969):65-67. Jayatilleke encouraged me to publish this piece, promising that he would

revise his thesis in a future edition. Unfortunately, he died in 1970.

13. *Thag* 1002-1003, translation by Mrs. C.A.F. Rhys Davids.

14. *M* 1.395.

15. *D* 3.134.

16. *M* 1.429.

17. *D* 1.137-141.

18. *S* 2.25.

## CHAPTER 16

1. See Ayer, *The Concept of a Person*, p. 38.

2. ibid., pp. 36 ff.

3. See also his Introduction to James' *Pragmatism and The Meaning of Truth*, pp. xv-xxx.

4. *The Concept of a Person*, pp. 22, 46.

5. ibid., p. 44.

6. *The Principles of Psychology*, pp. 195-196.

7. ibid., p. 264.

8. See my *The Principles of Buddhist Psychology*, p. 12.

9. *The Concept of a Person*, p. 62.

10. ibid., pp. 48-49.

11. *D* 3.5, 227.

12. *A* 3.415.

13. *M* 1.55 ff.

14. *The Concept of a Person*, p. 28. -- Introduction to *William James, Pragmatism and the Meaning of Truth,* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY


**Primary sources:**

*Aṅguttara-nikāya,* ed. R. Morris and E. Hardy, 5 vols., London: Pali Texts Society, 1885-1900.

*Aṅguttara-nikāya -aṭṭhakathā Manorathapūranī,* ed. M. Walleser and H. Kopp, 5 vols., London: Pali Text Society, 1924-1956.

*Dhammapada,* ed. S. Sumanagala Thera, London: Pali Text Society, 1914; also ed. and tr. David J.

*Digha-nikāya,* ed. T. W. Rhys Davids and J.E. Carpenter, 3 vols., London: Pali Text Society, 1890 1911.

*Itivuttaka,* ed. E. Windish, London: Pali Text Society, 1889.

*Majjhima -nikāya,* ed. V. Trenckner and R. Chalmers, 3 vols., London: Pali Text Society, 1948-1951; tr. I.

B. Horner, *The Middle Length Sayings,* 3 vols., London: Pali Text Society, 1954-1959.

*Petavatthu-aṭṭhakathā,* ed.J. Minayeff, London: Pali Text Society, 1888.

*Pratityasamutpāda-sutra,* ed. N.P. Chakravarti, *Epigraphia Indica* 21, Delhi: Government of India, 1931, pp. 179-199.

*Ṛgveda,* see *Ṛgvedasaṁhitā,* ed. F. Max Muller, 6 vols., London: W. H. Allen, 1849-1874; tr. F. Max Muller, *Vedic Hymns, The Sacred Books of the East,* vol. 32, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1891; tr.

Walter H. Maurer, *Pinnacles of India's Selections from the Ṛgveda,* Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1986.

*Saṁyutta-nikāya,* ed. L. Feer, 6 vols., vol.6 Mrs Rhys Davids London: Pali Text Society, 1884-1904.

*Satapatha Brāhmana,* ed. V.S. Gauda, C. Sharma and S.V. Sastri, 2 vols., Benares: Acyuta Granthamala Karyalaya, 1922-1937.

*Sutta-nipāta,* ed. D. Andersen and H. Smith, London: Pali Text Society, 1913.

*Sutta -nipāta-aṭṭhakathā,* ed. H. Smith, 2 vols., London: Pali Text Society, 1916-1917.Vol. 3 indexes 1918

*Sūyagadam (Sūtrakṛtāṅga)* with commentary of Sīlāṅka, ed. A.S. Suri and C. Ganindra, 2 vols.,

Bhavanagara, Bombay: Vijayadeva Sura, 1950-1953.

*Theragāthā,* see *Thera-theri gāthā,* ed. H. Oldenberg and R. Pischel, London: Pali Text Society, 1883.

*Therigāthā,* see *Theragāthā.*

*Taittirīya Brāhmana,* ed. Rajendrala Mitra, 3 vols., *Bibliotheca Indica, Calcutta:* Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1859.

*Udāna,* ed. P. Steinthal, London: Pali Text society, (reprint) 1948.

*Upanisads*, see *The Principal Upanisads*, ed. and tr. S. Radhakrishnan, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1953,tr. R. E. Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanisads*, London Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.

*Vibhaṅga*, ed. C. A. F. Rhys Davids, London: Pali Text Society, 1904.

**Secondary sources:**

Ayer, A.J., *Language, Truth and Logic*, London: Victor Golancz, 1936.

-- *The Concept of a Person and Other Essays, London: Macmillan, 1963.*

-- *Bertrand Russell, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1972.*

-- *Wittgenstein*, New York: Random House, 1985

Feynman,Richard, *The Character of Physical Law*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M. I. T. Press, 1990, James, William, *Some Problems of Philosophy*, ed. F. Burkhardt, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979.

-- *The Will to Believe*, ed. F. Burkhardt, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979.

-- *The Principles of Psychology*, ed. H. Burkhardt, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983.

Jayatilleke, K. N. *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1963.

Kalupahana, David J., *Causality. The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1975.

-- *The Principles of Buddhist Psychology* Albany: The State University of New York Press, 1987.

-- *A History of Buddhist Philosophy*, Honolulu: The University of Hawaii Press, 1992.

-- *A Path of Righteousness*, Lanham, Maryland: The University Press of America, 1986.

Luntley, Michael, *Language, Logic and Experience. The Case for Anti-Realism*, LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court, 1988.

Peirce, Charles Sanders, *The Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, selected and edited by Justus Buchler, New York: Dover, 1955.

Putnam, Hilary, *The Many Faces of Realism*, LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court, 1989

Quine, W. V., *Quiddities. An Intermittantly Philosophical Dictionary*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987.

-- *Pursuit of Truth*, Revised Edition, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992.

Tilakaratne, Asanga, *Nirvana and Ineffability: A study of the Buddhist theory of reality and language*, Kelaniya (Sri Lanka): Post-graduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Kelaniya, 1993.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*, *tr.* D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961.